

Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy

EDITED BY

Jon Miller
Brad Inwood

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Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy

Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy is a multi-author reassessment of the profound impact of the Hellenistic philosophers (principally the Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics) on such philosophers as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Locke. These early modern philosophers looked for inspiration to the later ancient thinkers when they rebelled against the dominant philosophical traditions of their day.

In this volume, leading historians of philosophy, utilizing a wide range of styles and methods, explore the relationship between Hellenistic philosophy and early modern philosophy, taking advantage of new scholarly and philosophical advances.

Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy will be of interest to philosophers, historians of science and ideas, and classicists.

Jon Miller is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

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Edited by

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List of Abbreviations

In addition to the following commonly used abbreviations, other abbreviations appear in some chapters.

A-T plus volume and page numbers = Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, eds., *Descartes' Oeuvres*, vols. I–X (Paris: J. Vrin, 1964–74).

CSM or CSMK plus volume and page numbers = J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (plus A. Kenny for vol. III), eds. and trans., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vols. I–III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–91).

D.L. plus book and chapter numbers = Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*.

I-G plus page number = Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson, eds. and trans., *Hellenistic Philosophy* 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997).

L-S plus chapter and section numbers = A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, eds. and trans., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vols. I–II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

M = *Adversus Mathematicos* (*Against the Professors*), Sextus Empiricus.

P.H. = *Pyrrhoneae Hypotyposes* (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*), Sextus Empiricus.

SVF plus volume and item numbers = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vols. I–III, H. von Arnim, ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–5).

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Preface

Most of the chapters published here originated at a conference held at the University of Toronto in September of 2000. At the original suggestion of Jon Miller, who was working at the time on the topic of Spinoza and the Stoics, the organizers invited a number of leading scholars working in either Hellenistic or early modern philosophy, and several whose work already spanned both periods, to explore various aspects of the relationship between these two periods. Some chose to deal with historical connections and the transmission of ideas between ancient and modern times, but most focused on the comparisons and contrasts between and among the ideas themselves. Jerome Schneewind and Myles Burnyeat drew the session to a close with a roundtable discussion suggesting provisional conclusions as well as future directions for work. From the outset, the organizers of the conference aimed at including a wide range of styles and methods in the history of philosophy, and that variety is evident in this collection. We would like to think that a project of this kind might encourage communication among those who work in different ways on the history of philosophy, as well as among those who work on different historical periods.

The speakers at the conference were Donald Ainslie (University of Toronto), Gail Fine (Cornell University), Terence Irwin (Cornell University), Anthony Long (University of California at Berkeley), Stephen Menn (McGill University), Phillip Mitsis (New York University), Margaret Osler (University of Calgary), Donald Rutherford (University of California at San Diego), and Catherine Wilson (University of British Columbia). One contributor to this volume, Steven Nadler (University of Wisconsin at Madison), could not attend but graciously sent us his chapter afterwards; Jon Miller's chapter was also added later. The success of the conference was greatly enhanced by the participation of commentators, many of them graduate students from the University of Toronto, and we would like to thank them: Margaret Cameron, Karen Detlefsen, Professor Doug Hutchinson (University of Toronto), Professor Alan Kim (University of Memphis), Peter

Koritansky, Sarah Marquardt, Professor Fabrizio Mondadori (University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee), Tobin Woodruff, and Doug Wright. We would also like to acknowledge financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as well as the Departments of Philosophy and Classics, the Connaught Fund, the School of Graduate Studies, and the Centre for Medieval Studies, all at the University of Toronto. The editors are grateful for permission from Cambridge University Press to include the chapter by Anthony Long, which will also appear in the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (editor Brad Inwood).

Introduction

J. B. Schneewind

The great covered cisterns of Istanbul were built during the sixth century of the common era. Their roofs are held up by row upon row of stone pillars. Many of these pillars were made specially for the cisterns, but others seem to have been pieced together from whatever broken bits of column were available to the builders: a pediment of one style or period, a capital of another, a shaft from yet a third. The provenance of the parts did not matter. It sufficed that this material from the past served the present purpose.

Architects have other ways of using the past. Consider New York City's old Pennsylvania Station: it was meant to look like a Roman bath, perhaps in order to transfer the grandeur of the ancient empire to the modern railroad company that was displaying its wealth and glory. Or consider some of the post-modern buildings now on display in our cities: Gothic arches atop glass-fronted skyscrapers after Corbusier or Mies, with additional odd bits and pieces of whatever style it amused the architect to incorporate. The elements are meant to recall the past, if only to dismiss it, even while they are intended to function in a striking new structure.

This volume shows that philosophers have as many ways of using the past as architects have. The chapters here assembled were written for a conference on the role of Hellenistic philosophy in the early modern period. Some of them discuss past philosophers who consciously used or deliberately refused to use the work of their predecessors. The authors of these chapters do not themselves use the past in their presentations. Other chapters use the thought of Hellenistic thinkers to describe and analyze the work of early modern philosophers. The chapters in the first group are historical studies of past philosophers' stances toward earlier work; the chapters in the second group use the work of Hellenistic thinkers as a source of landmarks for locating early modern work, so that we can place it more exactly on the historical scene or in relation to our own work. Only a few of the chapters explicitly ask methodological or meta-historical questions about the work being done. In this Introduction, I will raise a few

such questions that seem to me to emerge naturally from the chapters themselves.

Long and Osler show us a pair of philosophers – Lipsius and Gassendi – who want their views to recall those of past schools of thought: Stoicism and Epicureanism. Of course they were not simply repairing old monuments. A noted architect remarks that “slavishly restoring old buildings to their supposed original condition . . . goes against the very grain of traditional architecture.”¹ It goes against the grain of philosophy as well. As Long and Osler make clear, both these philosophers felt that their own Christian allegiances made it necessary for them to build major modifications into the old structures. Nonetheless, they plainly wanted to be read as reviving ancient systems. Osler raises the question of why Gassendi wished to show that the antique buildings could profitably be retrofitted with the latest Christian appurtenances. She points to the usefulness of Epicureanism for Gassendi’s anti-Aristotelian purposes. But it seems to me that that alone does not wholly explain the depth and passion of Gassendi’s commitment to his master. He could, after all, have been an anti-Aristotelian atomist without espousing Epicurean ethics. And although the question of why a philosopher would revive an ancient view applies to Lipsius as well, Long does not ask it.

We may get a clue to an answer, applicable to Lipsius as well as to Gassendi, in the fact that both of them switched religious allegiance more than once. Perhaps they wished to use antiquity to show that the sectarian differences that were wracking Europe should not be allowed to have so much importance. If pre-Christians could design an edifice that held up well enough over the centuries to accommodate the way we live now, it would seem that our present disagreements with one another were not fundamental.² The times in which they lived, as well as their own troubled religious experiences, made this point a matter of great importance. Whether the particular hypothesis is right or wrong, an answer of this sort would help us understand why philosophers engage in this sort of rebuilding, and this is a point that needs an explanation whenever a philosopher does so. The explanation may well not be a philosophical one. It may, however, point to the engagement of the philosopher with central social or political problems of his or her own times, and that in itself is an important, if often neglected, aspect of the history of philosophy.

Locke’s use of Cicero, as Mitsis presents it, seems to call urgently for an explanation of some kind. Locke did not on the whole present his thoughts as reviving those of antiquity, but Mitsis argues that in discussing moral education, he did. Locke, he says, not only recommended Cicero’s *De Officiis* as a useful teaching device; he seemed to espouse the morality it conveyed. Yet his own Christian views – however unorthodox they may have been – make this quite puzzling. If the evidence of Locke’s nearly life-long devotion to Cicero is as compelling as Mitsis claims it is, then the question of why Locke relied so heavily on *De Officiis* is indeed difficult. Was Locke inconsistent in

doing so, and did he finally come to see this, as Mitsis suggests? In any case, the question remains why he built Cicero so visibly into his thoughts on education to begin with. Mitsis raises the question but leaves it unanswered.

Rutherford makes it clear that Leibniz takes pains to emphasize the ways in which he preserves important elements of the thought of his predecessors. Unlike Lipsius and Gassendi, he does not take material from only one ancient style, nor indeed does he confine himself only to antiquity. He found valuable stones in cathedrals as well as porches. Rutherford helps us to understand the complexity of Leibniz's appropriation of the past, and Wilson's chapter brings out another aspect of Leibniz's use of ancient thought – his subtle acceptance of elements of Epicureanism. In doing so, she broadens our appreciation of the ways in which that view was used quite generally in the early modern period. But like Rutherford, she does not take up the question: why was Leibniz concerned not only to display fragments of the past in his systematic edifice, but also to stress their provenance? I suggest we must turn again to religious concerns. If we can now see that many different ancient thinkers had each built upon some part of the truth, the same is likely to hold now. Perhaps the warring sects of European Christendom each have something to contribute, and perhaps the Chinese could not only learn from us but help us in our own design. We must hope that together we are making not a tower of Babel but an ultimately unified and worthy monument to God's infinite wisdom as the architect of the best world.

Miller argues that Grotius was actually influenced by Stoicism (as some modern scholars interpret it) in his view of natural law and its place in moral deliberation, but that we cannot be at all sure that Spinoza was. Grotius knew and cited Stoic texts; we have not as much evidence that Spinoza knew them, and he does not cite them. Miller thus concurs with Long about the relations between Spinoza and the Stoics. Like Long, he points to affinities between Spinoza's ethics and Stoicism as well as to differences. But both of them might agree that Spinoza resembles not the architects of Penn Station but the workers who threw together patchwork pillars for the Istanbul cisterns. Spinoza did not care where the parts came from or what they reminded us of as long as they were useful for the construction of a temple in which a most untraditional deity could be contemplated in most untraditional ways by those in the know.

I think Miller is right in saying that Grotius was different. But he does not explain why that vastly learned man should have presented himself as influenced more by Stoicism than by other theories he knew just as well. More specifically: why did he choose to stress the fact that he was using Stoic materials in constructing his own natural-law edifice? What was he doing in aligning himself with the Stoics? What did he think he gained by linking himself with that tradition?

Miller sees that the answer may take us outside philosophy. And he goes on to raise an important historiographical question. Grotius and Spinoza

were not facing the same problems the Stoics faced. Miller does not elaborate; perhaps he is thinking that the dominance in seventeenth-century Europe of a view of God and His relations to morality that the Stoics could not have considered is a chief feature of the situation of early modern philosophy. How, then, Miller asks, are we to understand the later use of an earlier theory when the problems to be approached with the aid of the theory have altered? I think that this is a particularly appropriate question when the subject is, as it was for this conference, the use made of earlier philosophers by later ones. The fact that the other chapters pay little or no attention to it is perhaps a result of the way we now think of philosophy itself.

Philosophy today is often done with a full and deliberate disregard of the past. Philosophers, it is supposed, take up certain problems that could be taken up at any time. The basic question about their work is whether they have gotten the right solution. Where the problem came from, or where they got their solution from, are matters of little or no interest. This view affects much current historiography, but I agree with Miller in thinking that it may not be the most helpful way to approach the subject.

We are often taught that when we work in this ahistorical way, we are following the innovative example of Descartes. Stephen Menn strikingly suggests that we should be rather cautious about taking Descartes' claims at face value: even his claim to be disregarding the past seems, remarkably, to belong to a tradition of intellectual self-portraiture. Descartes may or may not have known about his ancestry in Galen; besides, Menn says, he was indeed innovating at least in claiming to have a novel method of philosophizing. Why was originality so important to him? It is not enough to say that he wanted foundations for the new science. Gassendi wanted them too, but he got them by reusing the past. Historians of philosophy now do not push this kind of inquiry to its limits. Perhaps we leave off because we think it is a matter of course. We are Cartesian enough to assume that in attending to the original parts alone of what philosophers say, we are considering whatever is of importance in their work.

Fine's chapter raises a question about Descartes' originality that is different from Menn's. She asks whether Descartes in fact said something new about our knowledge of our subjective states, or whether he had been anticipated by earlier Hellenistic authors. Against Burnyeat and McDowell she argues that he had been. But she is not arguing at all that Descartes used the work of his predecessors – if without acknowledgment. For Long, Osler, Mitsis, and Miller, some or much of what their philosophers say is *explained* by their appropriation of past work. For Fine, nothing in Descartes is explained by his relation to the Cyrenaics or to Sextus. Fine is simply trying to locate Descartes in relation to what had gone before, and to object to the views of other interpreters of Descartes. Her enterprise is descriptive. She does not, for instance, say either that Descartes went further with errors that had

already been made by the ancients, or that he took ancient insights further than their originators. She is simply using the distant past of philosophy as providing landmarks with which to get a better fix on the location of a building from our own less-distant past.

Nadler, like Fine, is trying to compare his philosopher's position with earlier views. But where Fine is making a historical claim, Nadler says he is not. He is not interested in how much Spinoza had read of kabbalah or of Philo. His aim is to show that Spinoza was not a mystic and that there is no mystical epistemology, whether kabbalistic or Philonic, in his work. Spinoza's own writings show that earlier commentators who claimed him for mysticism were just mistaken. Nadler needs to refer to earlier mystical writers only because the commentators he is criticizing saw them as sources for Spinoza. But his main point seems to be that if mysticism puts us off, we needn't worry: Spinoza is untouched by it, and so is available for purely rational discussion. Nadler uses earlier writers simply as landmarks, to show more precisely where Spinoza is not.

Ainslie aims to locate Hume's own skepticism by relating it to earlier versions of skepticism. But he argues in addition that Hume himself used past skepticisms for the very same purpose. If Hume were not adopting any of the ancient versions of the doctrine, he was at least using them to describe his own position. Hence Ainslie's study is historical in a way that Nadler says his is not. Ainslie could not have used contemporary skeptics to make his point, even if his aim is in part to relate Hume's skepticism to versions of it currently under discussion. Given Ainslie's partial historical concern, it would have been helpful had he investigated just what Hume wanted to achieve with a new kind of skepticism, one that worked differently from those available to him in past writers.

Like Locke, Butler takes Cicero as a source for an understanding of Stoicism. Long holds that Butler appropriated various Stoic insights. But Irwin does not make this claim about Butler. Like Fine, Irwin is using Hellenistic thinkers simply as landmarks with which to locate Butler's thought. The Stoics might have influenced Butler, he holds, but for his purposes the point is not important. He does not say that anything in Butler is explained by his acceptance of a part of Stoicism. Hence he is free to use the later Waterland as another marker for fixing Butler's position.

Irwin locates himself in the conventional Cartesian tradition by the amount of attention he pays to discussing whether Butler got matters right. Although he gives us a meticulous account of certain Stoic views and the arguments they involve, his real interest seems to lie in defending a version of eudaimonism that he takes Butler to have appreciated only inadequately. Irwin thus treats historical and systematic study as working with one another. For him, the ancient and early modern authors are presenting live options among which we need to decide. The interest lies in arguments that can be put in historically transparent terms. He shows us a way of working in

the history of philosophy that makes it clear that the enterprise need not be purely antiquarian.

This way of handling the history of philosophy is common nowadays. It can yield valuable insights about the structure of past philosophical views. But it seems to me to lose any grip on the pastness of the past. It ignores the question Miller raises: what are we to make of the fact that later thinkers were facing problems their predecessors could not have envisaged? It ignores the question of what the philosopher being examined was doing in his culture and his time in proposing his views as worthy of attention. And it does not lead us to investigate why philosophers take the particular stand toward their past that they do. All these questions need to be answered if we are to broaden our appreciation of the varied ways – brought out so well by the chapters in this volume – in which past philosophers have related themselves to their own pasts, which are also ours.

Notes

1. Richard Rogers (1997), 79.
2. I owe this suggestion to John Cooper, who makes it in a forthcoming essay on Lipsius.

Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition

Spinoza, Lipsius, Butler

A. A. Long

I. Diffusion and Diminution

Of all the ancient philosophies, Stoicism has probably had the most diffused but also the least explicit and adequately acknowledged influence on Western thought.¹ No secular books were more widely read during the Renaissance than Cicero's *On duties* (*De officiis*), the *Letters* and *Dialogues* of Seneca, and the *Manual* of Epictetus. Thomas More's Utopians define virtue as "life in accordance with nature," and this is characteristic of the way slogans and concepts of Stoic ethics were eclectically appropriated from about 1500 to 1750. Neo-Stoicism (capitalized) is a term often used to refer to currents of thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it is quite appropriate to such figures as Lipsius and du Vair.² Yet in spite of the Stoic traces in Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Rousseau, Grotius, Shaftesbury, Adam Smith, and Kant (traces that modern scholars are increasingly detecting), Neo-Stoicism scarcely had an identifiable life comparable to Medieval Aristotelianism, Renaissance and later Scepticism, seventeenth-century Epicureanism, or Renaissance Platonism and the Cambridge Platonists. It was not determinate enough to mark a whole period or intellectual movement.

In recent decades, ancient Stoicism has become a mainstream scholarly interest.³ Not coincidentally, this revival is echoed in work by such well-known thinkers as Foucault, MacIntyre, and Taylor, and we now have Becker's intriguing book, *A New Stoicism*, which offers itself as the kind of ethical theory that a modern Stoic could and should defend. But Stoicism as systematic philosophy has hardly been refashioned at any time.⁴

Many explanations for this curiously scattered legacy suggest themselves. Ancient Stoicism is far less accessible in its original and comprehensive form than the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Sextus Empiricus. We have only scraps of the pre-Roman Stoics. A general idea of Stoic physics and logic could be gleaned from the widely read summary compiled by

Diogenes Laertius and from Cicero's *De natura deorum*, *Academica*, and *De fato*, but the philosophical significance of these branches of Stoicism has come to light mainly through the scholarly research of the past half century. What was most accessible and influential for the Renaissance and Enlightenment was the treatment of Stoic ethics by Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

Along with the fragmentary state of the ancient sources, Stoicism was easily conflated or assimilated, on casual acquaintance, to ideas associated with the much more familiar names of Platonism and Aristotelianism. The conflation is not, of course, wholly mistaken. Outside metaphysics and technical logic, the three philosophies do have much in common, as the Academic Antiochus, Cicero's friend and teacher, recognised. How easily they could be eclectically synthesized is particularly evident in the works of Philo of Alexandria, and even in Plotinus. This assimilation becomes still more complex in the writings of such early Christian thinkers as Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Calcidius. Some Stoic doctrines, such as the identification of God with fire and the denial of the soul's immortality, were anathema to the early Fathers of the Church, which helps to explain why no complete texts by any early Stoic philosophers have survived. But early Christianity appropriated a great deal of Stoic ethics without acknowledgement.

The results of this complex process of transmission were not conducive to the revival of ancient Stoicism in anything like its classical form. First, much that had been distinctively Stoic in origin was absorbed into the complex amalgam of Judaic and Greek teaching that became Christian theology and ethics. So Stoicism is a part – but a largely unacknowledged part – of the Christian tradition. Second, the assimilation of Christian and Stoic ethics tended to blur the profound differences that really exist between the two belief systems, to the detriment of the Stoics' originality.

There is, however, a third and deeper reason why no fully-fledged representation of the ancient Stoa has emerged in neo-Stoicism. Of all the Greek schools, the Stoa in its Chrysippean phase was the most systematic, holistic, and formal in methodology. It can best be compared in this respect, as we shall see, with Spinoza. Although Stoicism in antiquity was pillaged by eclectics, in the eyes of its greatest exegete Chrysippus, it was an all-or-nothing system. What I mean is not primarily the Stoic school's division of the world into fools and the utterly rare sage or its uncompromising insistence on the perfectibility of reason; I mean, rather, the idea, as stated by Cicero on the school's behalf, that Stoic philosophy is coherent through and through – a system such that to remove one letter would be to destroy the whole account.⁵ Although Stoicism does not have Spinoza's geometrical rigour, its rationalist ambition was similar to his. No modern philosopher, as far as I know, has ever taken this Stoic claim to complete coherence seriously, but I believe it is the key to the original system and to much of its appeal.

When one reflects on this point, it becomes easier to see why the few creative philosophers with an informed knowledge of the ancient sources would be inhibited from venturing on anything like a comprehensive neo-Stoicism. We have modern equivalents to Epicurean atomism and hedonism, but there is no modern counterpart to the Stoics' conception of the world as a vitalist and completely rational system, causally determined by a fully immanent and providential God. If, as I think, these concepts are fundamental to the grounding of Stoic ethics, there can be no fully authentic neo-Stoicism that dispenses with them. From this it does not follow that we moderns cannot make use of individual Stoic concepts, isolating them from their original cosmological, theological, and epistemic underpinnings. But it does follow, in my opinion, that without those underpinnings, the Stoic conditions for happiness and a good life will hardly seem rationally and emotionally compelling.⁶

In the main body of this chapter, I propose to focus on three thinkers: Baruch Spinoza, Justus Lipsius, and Joseph Butler.⁷ My choice is influenced by the wish to exhibit different aspects of the Stoic legacy that have a clear and distinct, though necessarily partial, affinity to the ancient school. In the case of Lipsius, we have the earliest example of a modern writer who seeks to show, by systematic reference to ancient texts, that Stoicism is virtually identical to Christian theology and ethics. Butler's interest in Stoicism is much less direct. In order to refute Hobbes and various contemporaries, Butler invokes the Stoic idea of "following nature" as part of his effort to ground morality in the psychological constitution of human beings. Much of Butler's reasoning is his own, but his treatment of the two basic instincts – self-love and benevolence – is too similar to the Stoic concept of *oikeiôsis* to be adventitious, and the primary role he assigns to conscience has some authentic Stoic antecedents. Spinoza makes only passing reference to the Stoics (see n. 14), and I know nothing about how much he may have been consciously influenced by them. However, his conception of God's equivalence to Nature and the ethical inferences he draws from his metaphysical propositions make for a fascinating comparison with Stoicism.

II. Spinoza (1632–1677): A Quasi-Stoic?

Leibniz charged Spinoza and Descartes with being leaders of "the sect of the new Stoics," but his assessment reveals more about his disquiet with their ethics and theologies than it tells us concerning how either of these philosophers viewed his own relationship to Stoicism.⁸ The modern assessment of Spinoza's Stoic affinity is a curious record of extremes. Some authoritative treatments of Spinoza omit mention of Stoicism altogether; others see Spinoza as heavily indebted to Stoicism and concerned to refashion it.⁹ For the purpose of these remarks, I prefer to view his relation to Stoicism from the perspectives of conceptual similarity and difference, leaving aside the

scarcely controllable question of his conscious indebtedness. It may be that he quite deliberately turned to Stoic texts or ideas, or that he was working in a milieu where he could not fail to imbibe them deeply; but even if either of these situations were so, I hesitate to characterise him, as Susan James does (n. 9), as “reworking . . . the ethics and metaphysics of Stoicism,” or as having “a huge intellectual debt” to that philosophy. For, as I shall indicate, Spinoza’s striking affinity to Stoicism coexists with striking differences between them. I shall begin by comparing Stoic cosmology with some of Spinoza’s principal propositions. Having done that, we shall be in a position to review their main agreements in ethics and also the differences between them in regard to providence and the divine nature.

Here, by way of introduction, is what Alexander of Aphrodisias says about Stoic cosmology, a text that Spinoza is most unlikely to have known (*De fato* 191,30 Bruns = *SVF* 2.945)¹⁰:

They [the Stoics] say that this world is one and contains all beings within itself; it is organized by nature, living, rational and intelligent, and it possesses the organization of beings, an organization that is eternal and progresses according to a certain sequence and order. The things that come to be first are causes of those after them, and in this way all things are bound together with one another. Nothing comes to be in the world in such a way that there is not something else that follows it with no alternative and is attached to it as to a cause; nor, on the other hand, can any of the things that come to be subsequently be disconnected from the things that have come to be previously, so as not to follow some one of them as if bound to it . . . For nothing either is or comes to be in the world without a cause, because there is nothing of the things in it that is separated and disconnected from all the things that have preceded. For the world would be torn apart and divided and not remain one for ever, organized according to one order and organization if any causeless motion were introduced . . . The organization of the universe, which is like this, goes on from infinity to infinity actively and unceasingly . . . Fate itself, nature, and the reason according to which the universe is organized they claim to be God; he is present in all beings and happenings, and in this way uses the individual nature of all beings for the organization of the universe.

The context of this passage is Stoic determinism, and it also includes four other fundamental Stoic doctrines. First, the world is a unitary system that contains all beings; second, the world is infinite in time; third, the world has God or Nature present in it throughout as its organizing principle; and fourth, God or Nature is equivalent to fate or causality, and to reason.

The surface affinities of Alexander’s text to Spinoza’s metaphysics are obvious. Like the Stoics, Spinoza identifies God and Nature (IVPref).¹¹ Like them again, he takes God to be both eternal and the immanent cause of all things (IP18–19). He insists, as they do, on strict causality: “Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow” (IP36). And again like them, he makes God the ground of causality (IP29): “In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the

divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way.” Spinoza and the Stoics seem to have a strikingly similar view about God’s or Nature’s causal powers and relation to necessity, the dependence of everything on God or Nature, and God’s or Nature’s presence throughout reality.

There is, however, one term in Alexander’s Stoic report that might suggest that the close resemblances I have adduced are actually superficial. Here, and sometimes elsewhere, the Stoics talk about the world in ways that imply it to be conceptually distinct from God or Nature. Spinoza does not do this because he sets out from the position that there is only one substance – namely, God – and that “Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God” (IP15). For Spinoza, the world simply is God or Nature. Do the Stoics disagree? The answer to this question is complex.

On the one hand, the foundation of Stoic physics is the postulation of *two* principles: one active = God (*theos*) and the other passive = matter (*hylē*). Stoic matter has three-dimensional extension, but taken by itself it has no other attributes: “It is without motion from itself and shapeless” (Sextus Empiricus, *M.* IX.75 = LS 44C). God, the active principle, is the corporeal cause or reason *in* matter. Because God and matter are constantly conjoined, their conjunction constitutes “qualified” substance. Accordingly the Stoics, when characterizing their two principles, reserve the term “substance” (signifying unqualified substance) for matter, and the term “cause” for God (D.L. VII.134 = LS 44A, LS 44C). Strictly then, the Stoic God is not substance as such but rather the “qualification” of substance.

On the other hand, because matter (signifying unqualified substance) has no attributes beyond three-dimensional extension, substance is something determinate only by virtue of God’s constant causal interaction within it.

In addition, the Stoic principles, notwithstanding their duality, are completely inseparable and correlative; hence the world they constitute is unitary rather than dualistic. Its unity is evident in the Stoic claim that, *sub specie aeternitatis* the world (*kosmos*) is “God himself, who is the individual quality consisting of all substance” (D.L. VII.137 = LS 44F). Alternatively, the world may be thought of as the finite system (*diakosmēsis*) that God periodically generates and destroys by his immanent activity. Here we seem to have an anticipation of Spinoza’s distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, whereby he advises his readers to think of nature, either as active – “God, in so far as he is considered as a free cause,” or as passive – “Whatever follows from the necessity of God’s nature, or from any of God’s attributes” (IP29S). This distinction is close to the one the Stoics make between God as universal cause and the organized world that is God’s necessary set of effects.

Furthermore, we need to attend to the two propositions Spinoza starts from in Part II of his *Ethics*: P1, “Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing”; and P2, “Extension is an attribute of God, or God is an extended thing.” Does Stoicism come close to Spinoza’s view of the relation between God, thought, and extension?

Here again, the answer must be yes. First, the Stoic divinity is a thinking being. Other names for him are *nous* (mind), or *logos* (reason) (D.L. VII. 135 = *SVF* 1.102), and these terms signify, as thinking does for Spinoza, an essential attribute of the Stoics' God. Second, the Stoics' God is an extended thing; there is no part of matter in which he is not physically present. Given the complication of the Stoics' dual principles, it is not strictly true for them as it is for Spinoza that "The thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that" (IIP7S). Yet, although God and matter in Stoicism are conceptually distinct, and each of them is an extended thing, their constant conjunction, as we have seen, generates a notion of unitary substance that is quite similar to Spinoza's. In addition, the Stoics would probably endorse his claim that "Whether we consider nature under the attribute of Extension, or under the attribute of Thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes" (ibid.).

Every nameable item in the Stoic world is an effect of God's physical interaction with matter. And because God is all-pervasive mind, God's thought as well as his extension are present everywhere. For Spinoza, too, "particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, or modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way" (IP25Cor). Precisely how Spinoza construes these affections or modes is a contentious issue I must leave to the experts to debate. What seems to be unquestionably common to him and the Stoics is the idea that ultimately all individual things derive their own mode of existence from the attributes of the single divine substance. In Stoicism we find this formulation:

The divine mind or thought pervades every part of the world, just like the soul in us. But it pervades some parts to a greater extent and others to a lesser degree. Through some parts it passes as "coherence," as through our bones and sinews, and through other parts as "intellect," as through our mind." (D.L. VII.138–9 = LS 47O)

This text states that the identity of all particular beings, whether animate or inanimate, is ultimately a function of God. God's thought or mind or activity manifests itself in the *coherence* of a stone, the *growth* of a plant, or the *soul* of an animate being. According to this Stoic *scala naturae*, every determinate thing is ultimately, just as Spinoza writes, "an idea in God, of which God is the cause" (IIP13S). The Stoics called these ideas, *spermatikoi logoi*, "seminal formulae," and because God is the *spermatikos logos* of the world, he is the causal principle of everything.

For the Stoic God, then, Spinoza's proposition that "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (IIP7) appears to hold, as does also part of the corollary that he draws: "From this it follows that God's power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting." Unlike Spinoza, however, the Stoics do not speak of God as having *infinite*

attributes or *infinite* extension. The Stoic God, though eternal, is finite in spatial extension. Beyond God or the world is infinite void.

Thus far, in the area of metaphysics or cosmology, affinities between Stoicism and Spinoza are unmistakable. It is true, of course, that Spinoza's manner of deducing his system has little in common with that of the Stoics. They do not begin, as he does, from definitions and axioms concerning attributes and essences, finitude, *causa sui*, and so on. It is also true that Spinoza's God or Nature is far more abstract and remote from empirical reality than the Stoic divinity in its manifestation as fire or *pneuma*. Nonetheless, the upshot of both systems is a broadly similar conception of reality – monistic in its treatment of God as the ultimate cause of everything, dualistic in its two aspects of thought and extension, hierarchical in the different levels or modes of God's attributes in particular beings, strictly determinist and physically active through and through.¹²

In order to test the significance of these connections, I turn now to a comparison of the two ethics. Given Spinoza's analytical rigour and the Stoics' claims to consistency, my findings thus far may be of more philosophical interest if we find the similarity continuing in their detailed ethical theories. Up to a point, the connection continues to be striking. Here, first, is an indication of this from the Stoic side.¹³

Individual human beings are "parts of universal nature," which is to say that they, like everything else, are necessarily connected to the world-system of which God is the cause. God or Nature manifests itself in particular animate natures as an impulse to self-preservation (see n. 12). This impulse, which is initially instinctual, becomes rational as human beings mature, and causes them to make value judgements about what is suitable or unsuitable to their survival. However, the rationality of these judgements is generally imperfect because most human beings fail to understand the organization of nature and their own individual natures. This imperfection has effects that show themselves in the passions, which are faulty value judgements.¹⁴ The passions involve treating things that are external to the mind as per se good or bad, whereas in fact they are ethically neutral. Happiness and freedom depend entirely on accommodating one's mind and purposes to the necessary causal sequence of nature. One can achieve that accommodation only by understanding that virtue consists in living according to one's nature, which entails consistently following the dictates of correct reasoning and thereby acquiring knowledge of God or Nature. As a consequence of that knowledge, a person sees that his or her momentary situation in the world could not be otherwise than it is. The ideally wise person has a mind-set that, in the coherence of its ideas and their practical implications, mirrors the necessary and rational sequence of natural events.

Spinoza endorses the main thrust of all these propositions. Here is an illustrative selection: "It is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature" (IVP₄ part). "Acting absolutely from virtue is nothing else in us but

acting, living, and preserving our being . . . by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one's advantage" (IVP24). "Knowledge of God is the Mind's greatest good; its greatest virtue is to know God" (IVP27). "In so far as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good" (IVP31). "In so far as men are subject to passions they cannot be said to agree in nature" (IVP32). "A free man thinks of nothing less than of death" (IVP67 part).

Rather than extend the quotations, I quote Hampshire 1951, 121 (who never refers to Stoicism): "To Spinoza it seemed that men can attain happiness and dignity only by identifying themselves, through their knowledge and understanding, with the whole of nature, and by submerging their individual interests in this understanding." Numerous Stoic citations of an exactly similar purport could be given.¹⁵

In addition, Spinoza agrees with the Stoics in a number of highly specific ways. In both systems, pity, humility, hope, and repentance are rejected as desirable states of mind.¹⁶ The Stoics also agree with Spinoza in extending the value of following virtue from the individual to society, and they do so for similar reasons. In both systems, virtue, construed as rationality and understanding, is treated as a good common to all human beings. Hence the Stoics argued that all goods are common to the virtuous, and that when one wise person acts, all others are benefited (Stobaeus 2.101,21 = LS 60P), And Spinoza writes: "The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men" (IVP37 part).

Spinoza's ethics becomes transparently and profoundly Stoic, when he writes (IIIApp32)¹⁷:

Human power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. So we do not have an absolute power to adapt things outside us to our use. Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things which happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty, that the power we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow. If we understand this clearly and distinctly, that part of us which is defined by understanding, i.e. the better part of us, will be entirely satisfied with this and will strive to persevere in that satisfaction. For insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary, nor absolutely be satisfied with anything except what is true. Hence, insofar as we understand these things rightly, the striving of the better part of us agrees with the order of the whole of nature.

These ethical links between Spinoza and the Stoics, especially when they are related to the ideas about God or Nature in both systems, are hardly coincidental. Yet it would be somewhat crass, in my opinion, to explain them as mainly due to Spinoza's deliberate though unacknowledged appropriation of Stoicism. The Stoic legacy here may have less to do with Spinoza's direct mirroring (possible though that is) than with intellectual, theological, and methodological affinity.

If one posits strict determinism, the dependence of everything on a single, intelligent causal principle, the physical extension of that principle everywhere, the self-perservative drive of all creatures, the ideal conformity of human nature to rationality and understanding, the incompatibility of happiness with servitude to passions and dependence on worldly contingencies; and if one also believes, as Spinoza and the Stoics did, that a mind perfectly in tune with nature has a logical structure that coheres with the causal sequence of events – if one believes all these things and follows up their implications, the rational constraints on one's ethics will lead one to a ground shared by Spinoza and the Stoics: a denial of free will (in the sense of facing an open future), an acceptance of the way things are, and an interest in cultivating the understanding as the only basis for achieving virtue, autonomy, and emotional satisfaction.

To this extent, and it is certainly a very large extent, Spinoza offers us a highly illuminating representation of a Stoic or quasi-Stoic philosophy. However, although I do not think that these findings are remotely superficial, they are certainly incomplete, and would be highly misleading if we left matters here. In two related respects that I have so far omitted, Spinoza and the Stoics are poles apart.

The first point has to do with teleology and divine providence. The Stoics take their cosmic divinity to be identical not only to causality (or fate) but also to providence, and they take the world, as caused and instantiated by God, to be supremely good, beautiful, and designedly conducive to the benefit of its human inhabitants. Spinoza, by contrast, regards it as an egregious error to suppose, as he puts it, “that God himself directs all things to some certain end . . . Nature has no aim set before it . . . This doctrine takes away God's perfection. For if God acts for the sake of an end, he necessarily wants something which he lacks” (IApp).¹⁸ Spinoza's target in these remarks was not Stoicism but the Judaeo-Christian tradition and its doctrine of a creator separate from his creation. He does not consider a view like that of the Stoics in which God is both immanent in everything and at the same time acting with a view to the good of the whole. There can be no doubt, however, that he would reject such a view both for the reasons I quoted and also because it would conflict with his conception of God's infinite nature and non-teleological reasoning.

The second major point of difference is Spinoza's insistence that, while our ideas are also God's ideas (since they are modes of God) and derive such adequacy as they have from God, his intellect must differ completely from ours; for we are only finite modes of God (IP17Cor2S). The Stoics, on the other hand, suppose that though God is not anthropomorphic, the divine mind has the same faculties as human beings have, and that a human being could in theory equal the divine in wisdom and excellence.¹⁹

If the Stoics had taken Spinoza's route of denying divine providence, they would have avoided a battery of objections brought against them from

antiquity onwards. As it is, they were faced with having to account for the apparent imperfections of a world whose author was a perfect being in ways we are supposedly equipped to understand and find rationally acceptable. I shall not discuss their responses to this objection here. But their differences from Spinoza over providence and the divine intellect, notwithstanding his doctrine of the “intellectual love of God,” make his system much more remote from theirs in what it implies (if it implies anything) about God’s relation to persons.

In treating the divine mind as a perfect paradigm of the human intellect – well-intentioned as well as rational – the Stoics wanted to suggest that we can be at home in the universe in ways that are analogous to a citizen’s living in an excellently administered city. The Stoic God has equipped us to live well as world citizens, who can discover in cosmic order a pattern of rationality we can make our own by cultivating the virtues of justice, moderation, and so forth. Most of us fail to make more than modest progress towards this goal because our dispositions lack the requisite strength and understanding. But the Stoics’ God, unlike Spinoza’s apparently, does speak to us directly in our own reasoning and appropriate choices, and underwrites the prescriptions of virtuous action. For obvious reasons, these thoughts were more acceptable to Christians and Jews than Stoic physical doctrines, which so strikingly anticipate Spinoza’s metaphysics.

III. Lipsius: Stoicism for Christians

The Flemish scholar Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) was not a philosopher in any deep sense of the word.²⁰ He was a brilliant classical philologist, who also wrote prolifically about ancient history, Christianity, and the political and religious issues of his troubled times. What makes him important, for the purposes of this chapter, is his unprecedented knowledge of many of the ancient sources of Stoicism, and also his cultural influence from about 1600 to 1750. In three treatises, *De constantia*, *Manuductio ad Stoicam philosophiam*, and *Physiologia Stoicorum*, Lipsius produced accounts of Stoicism that are based on a vast selection of Greek and Latin citations.²¹ These works, especially the first, were extremely popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lipsius relies heavily on Seneca, his favourite author, but his books include much of the Greek material that any modern scholar of Stoicism must draw on, and he sometimes weighs the value of different testimonies in a manner that anticipates modern scholarship. Anyone seriously interested in Stoicism at the time had to read Lipsius. His accounts of the school were the fullest available.

Unfortunately, Lipsius’ works were a disaster for the interpretation of Stoicism as systematic philosophy. This is so for three main reasons. First, in spite of his extraordinary command of numerous ancient sources, he did not know or did not use the evidence of Galen, Sextus Empiricus, the

Aristotelian commentators, or Marcus Aurelius, and even his citations of Cicero are few compared with what he drew from Seneca and Epictetus. Thus he bypasses much of the more technical material on Stoic cosmology. Second, he tends to confirm or correct the sources that he cites by additional reference to Platonist and Christian writers, so blurring or distorting the original Stoic doctrines. Third, and most damaging, he accepts Christianity as the criterion by which to assess the meaning and propriety of Stoicism.

What Spinoza in the next generation would have found particularly congenial in Stoicism is precisely Lipsius' target – the immanence of God in everything, the unity of God and matter, and universal determinism. Lipsius tries to bring Stoic statements about these issues into line with his understanding of Christian theology. The result is that Stoicism loses its distinctive character, and becomes a largely bland anticipation of Christian theism.

Lipsius knows that for Stoicism, God (or Nature) and matter are eternal and coextensive principles; that together these principles constitute the living organism that is the universe; and that God (or Nature), under the descriptions of fire or fiery breath or reason or mind, functions as the causal agent of everything. Rather than giving the term "nature" an independent meaning, Lipsius invites his readers to translate it as God: *Naturam dixi, intellego Deum* (*Phys.* I.2). The contrast with Spinoza's reverse usage, *Deus sive Natura*, is striking. Lipsius objects to the ideas that matter is coeval with God and that God could not exist without matter (extension). "God," he says, "is contained in things but not infused with them" (*Phys.* I.8): God is truly and primarily mind, and only secondarily the world (*ibid.*). Lipsius can find some Stoic support for this interpretation, but what he is after, and what he wants to find as the Stoics' intended meaning, shows how far he is from trying to understand them in their own terms.

As the Christian that he is, Lipsius will not tolerate pantheism, materialism, or the suggestion that God could countenance anything bad as humanly construed, or that God could be fully present to the human mind. Wherever he can, then, he tries to shift the Stoics away from a literal endorsement of such claims. He approves of the Stoics for having a vitalist conception of nature as distinct from those (Epicureans) who make it *bruta et sine sensu* (*Phys.* I.5). However, he shies away from treating God and matter together as nature. We should construe the Stoics' divine fire, he says, as nature par excellence, as *above* matter, and we should elucidate it with the help of biblical references to God's manifestation in fire. When the Stoics speak of God as being *in* things, they mean, as Scripture teaches, that "We have our being in God" (*Phys.* I.9).

With the help of Platonism, as distinct from strict Stoic doctrine, Lipsius confers negative value on matter, and treats it as the source of evil (*Phys.* I.14). This was not orthodox Stoic doctrine, but it enables Lipsius to relieve the Stoics of the problems that their theodicy faced in its attempts

to reconcile providence and strict determinism. In a similar vein, he takes Stoic statements about human *voluntas* to imply “free” will, and thus to be in line with Christianity (*Phys.* I.14).

The points I have just made with great brevity are complex issues. The sources on which Lipsius primarily relied are not free from ambiguity. I do not want to give the impression that he would have had any strong reason, given his time and place, to approach the Stoics more historically and critically. In his most popular work, *De constantia*, he focused not on the basic principles of Stoicism but on the philosophy’s utility as a way of strengthening the mind against anxiety and external troubles.

Relying heavily on Seneca, he imagines himself, when fleeing from the troubles of Flanders, confronted by one Longius, who restrains him with the words: “What we need to flee from, Lipsius, is not our country but our emotions; we need to strengthen our mind to give us tranquillity and peace amidst turmoil and war” (*Const.* 1). Longius proceeds to instruct Lipsius that the chief enemies of mental resolution are “false goods and evils” (*Const.* 7). In regard to externals, Lipsius should ask himself whether he has really lost something. With references to Stoic providence and determinism, he is told to acknowledge that natural phenomena are controlled by an “eternal law,” which is divine (*Const.* 13–20). The chief thrust of this treatise is the need to cultivate “voluntary and uncomplaining endurance of all human contingencies” (*Const.* 3). The instrument for this cultivation is “a good mind” or the rationality that we derive from God.

Lipsius puts numerous objections to his mentor, based on the thesis that the prescriptions he is being offered are not consistent with human nature, and Longius counters them (*Const.* 11). The work includes some original ideas, such as the claim that, of false values, the public ones are more harmful than the private because the mistaken praise attached to patriotism and pity has the bad effect of indoctrinating those who hear it (*Const.* 7). Longius argues persuasively that a high degree of simulation is involved when people grieve over public woes: these do not inflict actual loss on the majority, but they are affected by them because they lack the mental resolution to remain detached.

Lipsius’ *De constantia* is a more creative production than his technical writings on Stoicism, which involve only little exegesis. Given his turbulent epoch, fraught with religious disputes and persecutions, the contemporary appeal of the book is fully understandable. It is also, I think, more authentically Stoic than his others, especially in its emphasis on the mind and interiority as the only site of authentic goodness. Yet, in keeping with his heavy reliance on Seneca, the moralising of *De constantia* and its lack of rigorous argument were probably only irritating to philosophers of the calibre of Spinoza or Locke or Hume.²² Unfortunately, again, the modern world’s general image of Stoicism owes a great deal to Lipsius’ narrow focus on the uncomplaining endurance of one’s fate.

IV. Butler: The Ethics of Following Nature

I turn now to a philosopher who did appreciate some of the deeper structure of Stoic ethics. Joseph Butler, the Anglican Bishop of Durham in the middle of the eighteenth century, was a devout Christian. But in his *Sermons*, as distinct from his work *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, he looks for a grounding of moral philosophy that is to be independent of any appeals to revelation or divine law.²³ Butler's main targets are Hobbes' mechanistic treatment of human nature and the moral sense theory of Shaftesbury who, though "he has shown beyond all contradiction, that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness and vice the misery, of such a creature as man," yet has no remedy to answer "a sceptic not convinced of this happy tendency of virtue, or being of a contrary opinion" (*Pref.* 20).

Butler bases his ethics on an analysis of the human "constitution" or "nature." He starts from the idea that any particular nature consists of a whole of teleologically organized parts. Thus we can only get the idea of a watch, he argues, by considering how all its parts are so related as to serve the purpose of telling the time.²⁴ For human beings similarly, to get an idea of our constitution we need to view our inward parts ("appetites, passions, affections and the principle of reflection") not separately, but "by the relations which these several parts have to each other; the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience" (*Pref.* 12).

Butler's main thesis is that, by regarding the human constitution in this teleologically organized way, "it will as fully appear, that this our nature, i.e. constitution, is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears, that its nature, i.e. constitution or system, is adapted to measure time," with the decisive difference that "our constitution is put in our own power . . . and therefore accountable for any disorder or violation of it" (*Pref.* 13). He claims that "the ancient moralists had some inward feeling or other" corresponding to his thesis, which they expressed by saying that "man is born to virtue, that it consists in following nature, and that vice is more contrary to this nature than tortures or death" (*Pref.* 8). After giving his watch analogy, he writes (*Pref.* 14):

They had a perception that injustice was contrary to their nature, and that pain was so also. They observed these two perceptions totally different, not in degree, but in kind: and the reflecting upon each of them, as they thus stood in their nature, wrought a full intuitive conviction, that more was due and of right belonged to one of these inward perceptions, than to the other; that it demanded in all cases to govern such a creature as man.

Butler's ancient moralists are clearly the Stoics. For his use of the faculty he calls "conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason" he appeals to the beginning of Epictetus' first discourse (*Diss.* 1), and for taking its

object to be acting “abstracted from all regard to what is, in fact and event, the consequence of it,” he refers to Marcus Aurelius IX.6 and Cicero, *De officiis* I. 6 (*Diss.* 4).²⁵

Butler is aware that “following nature” is an ambiguous and contested expression. In his analysis of the human constitution, someone can follow nature in three distinct ways: (1) by acting according to any psychological propensity; (2) by following whatever passion happens to be strongest; and (3) by following the principle of reflection, which in terms of his teleological argument is superior to all our other faculties. Only in this third sense does Butler recommend following nature as *the* moral principle. What that means, he says, is man’s nature as a moral agent, as being a law to himself, as accepting the natural authority of reflection “to direct and regulate all under principles, passions, and motives of action” (*Serm.* II.19).

Butler takes it that human beings are naturally motivated both by a general desire for their own happiness, which he calls “self-love,” and also by “a variety of particular affections, passions, and appetites to particular external objects” (*Serm.* XI.3). He holds it to be no less certain “that we were made for society and to do good to our fellow-creatures” (*Serm.* I.3). For the purpose of analysis, he distinguishes between “the nature of man as respecting self, and tending to private good, his own preservation and happiness; and the nature of man as having respect to society, and tending to promote public good” (*ibid.*). He grants that these two primary motivations may conflict in individuals, but such conflict, so far from being necessary, is actually a violation of our natural constitution: “These ends do indeed perfectly coincide; and to aim at public and private good are so far from being inconsistent, that they mutually promote each other” (*ibid.*). In regard to self-love and caring for offspring our natures are broadly similar to those of other animals. What chiefly distinguishes us from them is our unique and governing principle of “conscience or reflection.”

Butler, as we have seen, cites Cicero’s *De officiis* in support of his claim that the object of the faculty he calls “conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason” is intended action as distinct from any actual consequence. In Sections I.11–15 of Cicero’s work, which follow shortly after I.6 (the passage cited by Butler), Cicero gives an account of the Stoic life in accordance with nature that seems much too close to Butler’s general thinking to be coincidental.²⁶ Cicero starts from claims concerning the self-preservative instincts of animals in general, and concludes with the thesis that honourableness (*honestum*) is the goal and fulfilment of a fully mature and rational human being. There is no reference in Cicero’s text to God or divine law or a strongly personified cosmic Nature, as is often the case in ancient expositions of Stoic ethics. The exclusion of such ostensibly heteronomous principles could explain why Butler was strongly influenced, as I shall presume that he was, by this further part of the *De officiis*. The key concept throughout Cicero’s exposition, as in Butler, is human nature.

All creatures, Cicero tells us, begin their lives by seeking to appropriate those things that are conducive to their survival and natural constitution, and to avoid everything that threatens them. Self-love, according to the Stoics, is the primary motivation, a concept they called *oikeiôsis* to oneself.

Equally innate, but manifesting itself later, is a second or secondary *oikeiôsis*—appropriation to a creature's offspring, which the Stoics took to be the foundation of human sociability.²⁷ Writing of how this manifests itself in humans, Cicero (*Off.* I.12) says:

Nature, by the power of rationality, connects one human being with another for the purpose of associating in conversation and way of life, and engenders above all a special love for one's offspring. It instills an impulse for men to meet together . . . and to be zealous in providing life's wherewithal not only for themselves alone but also for their wives, and children, and others whom they hold dear and ought to protect.

The two instinctual motivations that Butler makes primary – self-love and benevolence – are exactly prefigured in the self-directed and other-directed objects of Stoic *oikeiôsis*. Like Butler, too, the Stoics treated both instincts as equally natural, suitable, and mutually compatible. Thus far, according to Cicero's Stoic account, human beings are broadly similar to other animals in their natural motivations. What distinguishes us from them, as we mature, is the development of our capacity to reason.

In his treatment of human sociability, Cicero, as we observe, invokes nature's gift of rationality. What this signifies, however, goes far beyond the instrumental use of reason as a means of managing social life effectively. Rationality endows human beings, he says, with impulses to try to understand the world, and to cultivate truth and justice and propriety. In other words, thanks to rationality we possess a distinctively moral nature, in that (*Off.* I.14):

We are the only animal that has a sense of what order is, what seemliness is, and what good measure is in words and deeds. Therefore, no other animal perceives the beauty and charm and pattern of visible things. Moreover, our nature and rationality transfer these things by analogy to the mind, thinking that beauty, consistency, and order must be preserved in one's decisions and actions.

Taking it, like Butler, that our nature is teleologically constructed so as to promote our human excellence, the Stoics argued that our specific good, as human beings, cannot be identified by reference to things that are merely natural to the constitution we broadly share with other creatures.²⁸ Our constitution is distinctive in its rationality. Hence, to act in accordance with reason is natural to us in a way that is quite different from the naturalness of trying to stay healthy or looking after our offspring. While in general we have good reason to pursue self-preservation and social solidarity, our instincts to do so must always be submitted to our sovereign capacity to judge the best

action for creatures whose natural goal is virtue – that is, the perfection of reason as applied to human conduct.

Butler and the Stoics, then, agree to the following theses: (1) Nature, with respect to human beings, is a term that has multiple reference. It is natural for us to seek to fulfil those appetites that are conducive to the material well-being of ourselves and our fellow human beings. But “following nature,” as a moral principle, refers to our uniquely human capacity to reflect on our thoughts or possible actions, to approve or disapprove of them as morally appropriate, and to treat conformity to this faculty as our sovereign good and virtue.

(2) There is no basis in our given nature for any necessary conflict between self-love and benevolence, or between benevolence and our individual happiness. Butler, in effect, expresses the self-regarding and other-regarding aspects of Stoic *oikeiôsis* when he writes: “It is as manifest that we were made for society, and to promote the happiness of it, as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good” (*Serm.* I.9). He and the Stoics also agree that human beings are just as capable of neglecting their own interests as of neglecting the interests of others.

When I first read Butler, I thought that his description of the reflective faculty as “conscience” was a Christian intrusion. I now think in the light of his explicit appeal to Epictetus that he took himself to have Stoic support for this term. Glossing conscience as “this moral approving and disapproving faculty,” Butler notes (*Diss.* 1): “This way of speaking is taken from Epictetus, and is made use of as seeming the most full, and least liable to cavil.”²⁹ It is quite significant that Butler cites Epictetus from the *Discourses* rather than from the much more popular and summary *Manual*. Apart from the passage Butler cites, Epictetus regularly uses the word *aidôs*, literally shame or reverence, and *aidêmon* (the corresponding adjective), to refer to the internal self-judging faculty that he takes to be natural to (though hardly operative in) every human being.³⁰ Here are two examples from the *Discourses*:

God has entrusted yourself to you, and says: “I had no one more trustworthy (*pistoteron*) than you. Keep him for me in his natural state, reverent (*aidêmon*), trustworthy, high-minded, unperturbed, unimpassioned, undisturbed.” (2.8.23)

How are we endowed by nature? As free, as honourable (*gennaion*), as reverent (*aidêmones*). For what other animal blushes or has an impression of what is shameful (*aischron*)? (3.7.27)

We cannot know whether Butler was familiar with these passages of Epictetus, but they show that he had good reason to attribute to this Stoic a notion like his own concept of conscience, meaning by this:

a capacity of reflecting upon actions and characters [such that] we naturally and unavoidably approve some actions, under the peculiar view of their being virtuous and of good desert; and disapprove of others, as vicious and of ill desert. (*Diss.* I.1)

In the same context, Butler reveals his sympathy for Epictetus by saying, with respect to his observations on conscience: "This is the meaning of the expression 'reverence yourself'."

Butler, it is clear, has appropriated Stoic ethics to quite a large extent. Yet I would not call him a neo-Stoic, for two major reasons. First, he takes the Stoic ideal of complete freedom from passion to be inappropriate to "mankind . . . imperfect creatures . . . Reason alone, whatever any one may wish, is not in reality a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man; but this reason joined with those affections which God has impressed upon his heart: and when these are allowed scope to exercise themselves but under strict government and direction of reason; then it is we act suitably to our nature, and to the circumstances God has placed us in" (*Serm.* V.4). Butler, unlike Spinoza and the early Stoics, approves of compassion (*ibid.*), and implicitly rejects the Stoics' claim that the passions are errors of judgement. (He probably did not know the ill-attested doctrine of the "good passions" [*eupatheiai*] that characterize the virtuous in Stoicism.)

Second, and more important, Butler does not identify virtue with happiness. His view is, rather, that God apportions happiness to virtue in this world notwithstanding apparent evidence to the contrary (*Analogy* I.3.15–20). For Butler, happiness and misery include the material circumstances of persons and are "in our power" only "in many respects" (*ibid.* 18). For the Stoics, by contrast, happiness is solely constituted by virtue, and is entirely up to us. Butler, then, though he regards the individual's desire for happiness as entirely natural and proper, is not a eudaimonist. His project is not, or not primarily, to establish the necessary and sufficient conditions of happiness but to show, by analysis of human nature, that "man is thus by his very nature a law to himself" (*Pref.* 24).

Interestingly, the Ciceronian account of Stoic ethics, which I have associated with Butler's principal claims, is virtually silent about happiness. The main argument is devoted to showing that human nature, construed as rationality, provides the seeds of virtue, which is construed as giving ultimate value only to that which is honourable (*honestum*). After this point has been established, we are invited to agree that "things that are honourable pertain to living well and happily" (*Off.* I.19), but we are given nothing in the way of argument to tie virtue to happiness. That connection is so understated as to seem little more than an afterthought.

Cicero is not only reticent about happiness, he also says nothing about Stoic cosmology or theology. If, as I have surmised, Butler closely studied Cicero's text, that would help to explain his selective use of Stoicism in his ethics. Cicero's account depends primarily on claims about the instinctual drives and teleology of human nature, with reason providing an ethical sensibility that is the foundation for an understanding of honourableness and the particular virtues of which it consists. Here, together with Epictetus' concept of an "approving and disapproving faculty," we have a significant

anticipation of Butler's hierarchy of natural faculties and appetites, superintended by reflection. Given his wish to ground moral judgements in human nature rather than divine command or scripture, Cicero's account of Stoic ethics, with its reticence on cosmic nature and divine causality, has an appropriateness that Butler could not have found in the doctrines of Stoicism that resonate in Spinoza.

V. The Complexity of the Stoic Legacy

Modern scholars are divided in their opinions about what the founding fathers of Stoicism postulated as the foundations of their ethical theory. According to the traditional view, which I have often defended, they started from the teleology and rationality of cosmic nature or God, of which human nature was presumed to be an integral part. A minority of modern scholars have questioned this interpretation, noting the absence of cosmic nature from the seemingly authoritative argument for the evolution of moral awareness in Book III of Cicero's *De finibus*, and urging that, even in evidence where cosmic nature is made prominent, that concept does not make a clear or helpful contribution to the Stoics' principal findings about the human good.³¹ I continue to be convinced that the traditional interpretation, grounding ethics in theology and cosmic nature, was the original and essential Stoic position, but I readily grant that this is not emphasized in all of our sources, including Cicero's *De officiis*, with which we have been concerned in the last few pages. How do we explain this discrepancy?

We have to admit that Stoicism, unlike Epicureanism, was never a monolithic church. The differences of emphasis we find in our sources do not simply reflect the idiosyncracies of their authors – the mentality and interests of Cicero as compared with Seneca or Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius; these differences are also due to the fact that Stoic philosophers themselves were creative and critical in the way they presented their system. Chrysippus insisted that “universal nature and the organization of the universe are the only proper way to approach” ethics (Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1035C = LS 60A), but we hear nothing of this from the later head of the school Panaetius, who was Cicero's main source for *De officiis*. By focusing on human nature and by understating the early Stoic thesis that “our natures are parts of cosmic nature,” a later leader of the school like Panaetius could present Stoic ethics as a theory that could readily be compared with rival moral philosophies. Debate could centre on questions such as the sufficiency of virtue for complete happiness or the role of the emotions in the good life. The stage was set for treating Stoic ethics as an autonomous branch of philosophy, separable from physics and logic.

What I have said about Butler and the Stoics is sufficient to show that the Stoics have left us a significant legacy in ethics as so construed, and the

same point can be made with reference to Kant. The Stoics were the only ancient philosophers who maintained that the “honourableness” (*to kalon* or *honestum*) of the virtuous life is categorically different from every other positive value. It is therefore tempting to attribute to them a concept of the specifically “moral” good, anticipating Kant’s distinction between actions motivated by ordinary human interests and actions performed purely from duty, irrespective of their material consequences. Yet, in spite of the Stoics’ apparent affinity to Kant on these major points, they hardly foreshadowed the most distinctive principles of Kantian ethics.³² They did not arrive at their thesis about honourableness by a priori reasoning but by reflection on our empirical capacity to perfect ourselves, as rational beings, by identifying our own *utility* or happiness with virtue, and nothing else. In sharp difference from Kant, the Stoics were eudaimonists, determinists, deists, and defenders of the claim that human reason can have incorrigible access to the basic principles of reality. Once we ask why adherence to Stoic ethics coincides with happiness – why is it rational to identify complete happiness with nothing except virtue? – these non-Kantian claims clamour for attention.

Virtue, the Stoics will say, is necessary and sufficient for happiness because (1) it is the perfection of our rational nature; (2) our happiness is so conditioned by the cosmic Nature of which we are an integral part; and (3) nothing except happiness = moral virtue is a rational object of desire for beings whose nature is autonomous only in respect of their capacity to understand and assent to the causal sequence of events.

This kind of thinking is to be found in both the earliest and the latest Stoicism of antiquity. If we want a general description of the Stoic mentality and its rationale, here, I suggest, is where we best find it. The decisive move is the second proposition of the three I just stated – the conditioning of our happiness as virtue by the cosmic Nature of which we are an integral part. Contrary to what some modern scholars think (and what Butler may have thought), this move does not posit a heteronomous basis for ethics; the Stoics, as I have said earlier, take the voice of cosmic nature to *coincide with* good reasoning by persons. What the move does involve is the thesis that good reasoning by persons is compliance with the way things are, as determined by God or Nature.

In this chapter I have tried to show that the Jew Spinoza and the Christian Lipsius, albeit in very different ways, echo the deist underpinnings of Stoic ethics. They also help us to see the irreducible tension that exists in Stoicism between its physicalism and determinism, on the one hand (anticipating Spinoza), and its endorsement of divine providence and qualified human autonomy (anticipating Lipsius), on the other.³³ Butler, ignoring these complexities, shows the fertility of some Stoic concepts for developing a naturalistic ethics in which the idea of the specifically moral good is detached

from the idea of happiness. The challenge for a new Stoic ethics, as undertaken by Larry Becker, is to find a way of reuniting them without endorsing cosmic teleology.³⁴

Notes

This chapter began its life as a paper for a panel on Legacies of Stoicism, organized by the American Philosophical Association at its December meeting in Atlanta, 1996. I am grateful to Michael Seidler, my respondent on that occasion, for his excellent comments. I want also to thank the participants at the Toronto conference on which this volume is based for their questions and remarks, and especially my commentator, Sarah Marquardt. In revising the section of the chapter on Spinoza, I have benefited greatly from written comments by Jon Miller and Stephen Menn, and I am also indebted to my discussions with Don Rutherford.

1. For a brief account, which makes no claim to any original research, see Long (1974/1986), 232–47. For Stoicism in Christian Latin thought through the sixth century, see Colish (1985), vol. II. Traces of Stoic physics are identified by Funkenstein (1986), sv Index, Barker (1985), and Dobbs (1985). General bibliography: Barbour (1998), Morford (1991), Oestreich (1982), and Spanneut (1973). For Kant and Stoicism, see Seidler (1981) and (1983), and Schneewind (1996). For suggestions that Rousseau and Freud “each adapted Stoic doctrines for radically different sorts of therapeutic purposes,” see Rorty (1996).
2. Guillaume du Vair (1556–1621) published three works designed to show the value of Stoicism as a philosophy of life: *La philosophie morale des Stoïques*, *De la constance et consolation ès calamités publiques*, and *La sainte philosophie*. For Lipsius, see Section 3 of this chapter.
3. Hegel’s rather negative assessment of the Hellenistic philosophers, as expressed in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, tr. Haldane/Simson (1983) vol. II, esp. 232–6, had an adverse influence on historians of ancient philosophy from which the field is only now recovering. It was noted and politely criticized by Marx in the preface to his doctoral dissertation, *Differenz der demokratischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie* (Jena, 1841). There Marx announces his (unfulfilled) intention of writing a “larger work in which I shall expound Epicurean, Stoic, and Sceptic philosophy in connection with Greek speculation as a whole.”
4. See Foucault (1986), esp. 39–42, 50–68, 183–4; MacIntyre (1981) and (1988) (with criticism of MacIntyre’s account of Stoic ethics in Long (1983)); and Taylor (1989), who has interesting remarks on the neo-Stoicism he finds in Descartes and Shaftesbury, 147–53, 251–9. Taylor barely mentions Lipsius, omits Butler, and does not connect Spinoza’s views with Stoicism. Moore (1903) offers a few remarks on Stoicism, which I discuss in Long (1970/71). For Mill’s attack on “following nature,” as an ethical principle, see Long (1983), 196–7. Becker (1998) is reviewed with a nice blend of appreciation and criticism by Inwood (1998).
5. Cicero, *De finibus* III. 74. Cf. Long (1970/71), 90–1.
6. For a full statement of this judgement, see Long (1989), 97–101.

7. For additional discussion of Butler, see Chapter 11 by Irwin in this volume (eds.).
8. See Ariew and Garber (1989), 218–4. I owe this reference to an unpublished paper by Don Rutherford on Leibniz's critique of Stoicism.
9. As examples of the former, see Hampshire (1951), Garrett (1993), and Lloyd (1994). Of the latter, some, going back at least to Dilthey, have treated Spinoza as a neo-Stoic through and through: cf. Dilthey (1977), 285: "Spinoza's entire individual ethics, the aim of his work, is based on the Stoa – in fact in such comprehensiveness and with such agreements in detail that it seems unavoidable to assume his using the most widely read of the reworkings of the ancient tradition by the Dutch humanist Lipsius, his *De constantia*" (my transl. of Dilthey's German, as cited by Graeser (1991)). For a study that seeks to show that "much of the substance and structure of the Ethics ... constitute a reworking of Stoicism," see James (1993). James is reacting against the tendency to regard Spinoza as principally influenced by his near contemporaries, above all Descartes. Similarly Kristeller (1984), who finds Spinoza's determinism "clearly Stoic," and says Spinoza "follows the Stoics when he places the doctrine of the passions at the center of his ethics" (5). According to Kristeller (12, n. 23), Spinoza had Seneca and Epictetus in his library.
 Graeser (1991), 336 n. 5, agrees with Curley (1988), 137, and Bennett (1984), 16, that "Quellenforschung has not done much to advance understanding of the discussion of systematic problems in Spinoza." Instead, he focuses on "the apparent reworking of Stoic thoughts in Spinoza's ontology." As I do, he calls attention to the affinity between the two primary attributes of Spinoza's single substance, and the two Stoic principles, one "active" and the other "passive." He then engages in a detailed discussion about whether, in Spinoza and the Stoics, these two attributes or principles are to be regarded as objectively distinct, or as merely human ways of experiencing and understanding a monistic reality.
10. I adopt, with slight modifications, the translation by Sharples (1983), 70–1.
11. I cite Spinoza's *Ethics* from the edition by Curley (1985), and I adopt his translations.
12. Compare Spinoza's concept of *conatus* (IIP7): "The striving (*conatus*) by which each thing strives to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing" with the Stoic concept of *pneuma*. The Stoics explained the persisting identity of particular beings by reference to the "sustaining" power of the thing's internal *pneuma*, which also accounts for each thing's individual substance; cf. the texts in Long/Sedley (1987): 47 I, J, M, N. What Hampshire (1951), 92, calls "self-maintenance," in reference to Spinoza, is closely analogous to the Stoic doctrine, and in both philosophers it pertains to animate and inanimate things. Curley (1988), 112–15, notes the Stoics as antecedents of Spinoza's *conatus* doctrine, but he misleadingly also associates it with Epicureanism.
13. For what follows, I draw mainly on D.L. VII. 85–88 = LS 57A and 63C, Stobaeus 2.88.8 = LS 65A, Hippolytus, *Refutation of all heresies* 1.21 = LS 62A, and Epictetus I.1.7–12 = LS 62K and 2.14.7–13.
14. Spinoza misrepresents the Stoics when he writes (VPref.): "The mind does not have an absolute dominion over [the passions]. Nevertheless, the Stoics thought that they depend entirely on our will, and that we can command them

- absolutely." Here Spinoza seems to confuse the Stoic thesis that passions are judgements or functions of the rational mind with freedom of the will from antecedent causation. Lipsius similarly (*Phys.* I.14).
15. For instance, Marcus Aurelius IV.40: "One should continually think of the world as a single living being, with one substance and one soul . . . and how all its actions derive from one impulse; and Epictetus II.14.7: "The philosopher should bring his own will into harmony with what happens, so that neither anything that happens happens against our will, nor anything that fails to happen fails to happen when we wish it to happen."
 16. Pity: *SVF* 3.452, Spinoza IVP50. Humility: *SVF* 3.107, Spinoza IVP53. Hope: Seneca, *Ep.* 5.7–8, Spinoza IIIDefAffXII. Repentance: *SVF* 3. 548, Spinoza IVP54.
 17. Aptly quoted as such by Rutherford (1999), 457.
 18. Although James (1993), 306, mentions Spinoza's "adamant opposition to teleological explanation," she seems to me to overlook the great distance this creates between him and the Stoics' unqualified commitment to providence and God's special concern for human beings.
 19. Cf. Cicero, *ND* II.58, and *SVF* 3.245–52.
 20. For Lipsius' life and an outline of his works on Stoicism, see Saunders (1955). This is a useful book but rather uncritical in regard to Lipsius, and very much out of date in dealing with ancient Stoicism. There is a good study of Lipsius in French by Lagrée (1994).
 21. I cite these works from the following editions, available in the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley: *De constantia* (Leiden, 1584); *Manuductio* and *Physiologia stoicorum* (Antwerp, 1610).
 22. Unlike Dilthey (1977), I find it improbable that Spinoza's affinity to Stoicism was mediated by his reading of Lipsius.
 23. For Butler's works, I refer to the edition by Gladstone (1896). *Pref.* = the Preface to the *Fifteen Sermons* (*Serm.*) and *Diss.* = *Dissertation II. Of the Nature of Virtue*. I have read Butler's *Analogy* only cursorily. His purpose there is to find confirmation for the revealed doctrines of Christianity in the providentially generated processes of nature. There may well be affinities with Stoicism in this work, but I have not looked for them. For Butler's ethics, I have benefited from reading Penelhum (1985). Penelhum says virtually nothing about the Stoics, and I am solely responsible for the comparisons I make with Butler.
 24. MacIntyre (1981), 55–6, without mention of Butler, uses the watch example in order to illustrate how an "evaluative" conclusion, "This is a bad watch," validly follows from a factual premise such as "This watch is grossly inaccurate." MacIntyre's purpose in this context is to defend the Aristotelian idea of man as a functional concept: "'Man' stands to 'good man' as 'watch' stands to 'good watch.'" The essentialism that MacIntyre advances is very similar to Butler's teleological view of human nature.
 25. In the passage Butler cites, Marcus Aurelius distinguishes the "sufficiency" of correct judgement and moral action from everything that happens by external causes. What appealed to Butler in the Cicero passage must have been the claim there that honorableness (*honestas*) is "to be pursued for its own sake" (*propter se expetenda*). On the Epictetus reference, see Section 4 of this chapter following note 30.

26. Cicero's source, or main source, for this passage was probably Panaetius, on whom he explicitly drew for the Stoic theory he presents in the first two books of *De officiis*. In earlier versions of this chapter, I proposed that Butler was influenced by Cicero's account of Stoic ethics in *De finibus* III.16–21. That text has much in common with *De officiis* I.11–19, and that applies still more to the presentation of Stoic ethics in *De finibus* II. 45–7. However, Butler's acquaintance with *De finibus* can be no more than a guess, whereas we know that he read at least parts of the *De officiis*; so I now draw only on this latter work for my proposals concerning Butler's use of Cicero.
27. Michael Seidler has drawn my attention to Grotius' allusion to "the social tendency the Stoics called sociableness" (*oikeiôsis*) at the beginning of his work *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625).
28. See D.L. VII.87–9 = LS 63C; Seneca, *Ep.* 76.9–10 = LS 63D; Epictetus, *Diss.* I.6.12–21 = LS 63E.
29. Butler (ad loc.) even quotes Epictetus' Greek expression for "approving and disapproving" (*dokimastikê ê apodokimastikê*, *Discourses* I.1.1).
30. For Epictetus' concept of *aidôs* and its role as something like "conscience," see Kamtekar (1998).
31. Annas (1993), 159–66, and Engberg-Pedersen (1990), 16–63. I have said why I disagree with these scholars in Long (1996), 152–5. For further treatment of what I take to have been the original Stoic position, see Striker (1991), and Cooper (1996).
32. See Long (1989) and Schneewind (1996).
33. Given the importance Rorty (1996) rightly assigns to providence in her sympathetic account of Stoicism, I am puzzled by her reticence about the obvious difficulties it generates for modern interpreters.
34. That is precisely what Becker (1998) has bravely tried to do (see n. 4 above).

Early Modern Uses of Hellenistic Philosophy

Gassendi's Epicurean Project

Margaret J. Osler¹

In considering the ways in which early modern philosophers used Hellenistic philosophy, the concept of appropriation is particularly useful.² Rather than being the disembodied transmission and reception of ideas, the metaphor of appropriation gives agency to individual thinkers, and enables us to understand them in their own particular historical and intellectual contexts. Ideas do not influence subsequent ideas, nor do they develop by their own intrinsic power. Rather, particular individuals in real historical contexts deploy and develop earlier ideas to solve problems of their own. Thinking in terms of appropriation leads us to think about the historical agents as well as the content of their ideas. We must consider why particular figures were attracted to one tradition or another; how the way they asked their questions affected the use of the ideas they borrowed; and what role their own presuppositions played in their use of the appropriated ideas and texts.

Early modern philosophers often appropriated ideas from ancient philosophy and used them to solve new problems in new contexts. Looking back to classical times, philosophers considered an array of texts that had been deemed canonical, in terms of which they could develop their own positions. In part, this approach was an outgrowth of Renaissance humanism, which was devoted – among other things – to the recovery of ancient sources. Although the early humanists undertook largely philological projects – recovering and editing classical texts – philosophers by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were more likely to work out their philosophical positions in dialogue with the ancient philosophers. A case in point is Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), who attempted to produce a Christianized version of Stoicism to provide philosophical foundations for natural philosophy.³

Gassendi's Epicurean Project

Pierre Gassendi's (1592–1655) Epicurean project is a good example of an early modern use of Hellenistic philosophy. Gassendi intended his

reworking of Epicureanism to serve as a complete philosophy to replace the Aristotelianism that had dominated the university curriculum and had provided philosophical foundations for natural philosophy ever since the works of Aristotle were translated into Latin in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To this end, he devoted much of his writing to the articulation of a revised version of Epicurean atomism and hedonism. Although there were Renaissance precedents to Gassendi's interest in Epicureanism,⁴ Gassendi's project was unique in his emphasis on natural philosophy and in his desire to restore a complete philosophy. Writing in a humanist mode, Gassendi sought an ancient model on which to build a new philosophy.⁵ The classical options available to him included Aristotle, Plato, the Stoics, the Sceptics, and the Epicureans.

One might well ask why Gassendi, a Catholic priest, undertook the task of reviving and Christianizing the most flagrantly pagan of these philosophies. After all, Epicurus had denied the creation of the world along with any notion of design or providence, and he had believed that the human soul is composed of atoms that disperse at death. Gassendi's own writings are not very helpful on this score. The first indications of his interest in restoring Epicurus come from the early 1620s. In his earliest preserved letter, he mentioned that he possessed a copy of Lucretius, Epicurus' Roman expositor, although he said nothing about having read the book.⁶ His first published work, the *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos* (1624), not only reveals his acquaintance with Epicureanism, but also his desire to expound it – at least in ethics – in proposed future writings.⁷ The reasons for this interest remain somewhat obscure. One possible explanation for Gassendi's choice of Epicurus lies in the seemingly paradoxical fact that he found it easier to accommodate Epicureanism than any other ancient philosophy to his voluntarist theology and providential ethics⁸: "I seemed to observe that far more difficulties are far more easily explained from his [Epicurus'] physics of atoms and the void and from his morality of pleasure than from the positions of the other philosophers."⁹ Thus Gassendi's humanism was not the whole story. It was mitigated by his theological presuppositions. Gassendi did not accept all of Epicurus' claims uncritically, and regarded even those he approved of as merely probable¹⁰; he did, however, think that they could be modified to conform to the truths of religion.¹¹

From the mid-1620s, when he first showed an interest in the philosophy of Epicurus, until the 1640s, when he first defended it in print, his Epicurean project developed from the straightforward humanist undertaking of translating Book X of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, one of the major classical sources for knowledge of Epicurus' writings, to a full-fledged attempt to rehabilitate Epicureanism in light of Christian theology. During the 1630s and 1640s, Gassendi wrote several drafts of his work on Epicurus.¹² Gassendi first published a defence of Epicurus in *De vita et moribus Epicuri* (1647), refuting the allegations of decadence and immorality

that had followed him since antiquity. In 1649, he published *Animadversiones in decimum librum Diogenis Laertii*, a humanist work that was primarily a commentary on an ancient text. The posthumous *Syntagma Philosophicum* (1658) incorporated material from contemporary natural philosophy into an exposition of Epicureanism.¹³

Having moved beyond a philological or purely historical account of Epicureanism, Gassendi altered certain aspects of the ancient system in order to make this materialistic and anti-providential philosophy compatible with Christian theology. He eliminated the aspects of Epicureanism that offended orthodox sensibilities: polytheism, a corporeal conception of the divine nature, the negation of all providence, the denial of creation *ex nihilo*, the infinitude and eternity of atoms and the universe, the plurality of worlds, the attribution of the cause of the world to chance, a materialistic cosmogony, the denial of all finality in biology, and the corporeality and mortality of the human soul. Gassendi replaced these doctrines with a Christianised atomism that asserted God's creation of the world and its constituent atoms, his wisdom and providential care of the creation, and the existence of a large but finite number of atoms in a single world. He defended a role for final causes in natural philosophy along with the immortality and immateriality of the human soul.¹⁴

Gassendi was a theological voluntarist who emphasized the contingency of the world on divine will. He interpreted God's omnipotence as freedom from any necessity or limits. "There is nothing in the universe that God cannot destroy, nothing that he cannot produce; nothing that he cannot change, even into its opposite qualities."¹⁵ In other words, Gassendi believed that God's absolute power is in no way constrained by the creation, which contains no necessary relations that might limit God's power or will. Even the laws of nature lack necessity. "He is free from the laws of nature, which he constituted by his own free will."¹⁶ Indeed, God can do anything short of violating the law of non-contradiction.¹⁷ God was totally free in choosing to create the world: He could have abstained from creating it just as freely as he chose to create it.¹⁸ Moreover, God could have created an entirely different natural order, if it had pleased him to do so.¹⁹ That is to say, God could have created black snow, and he could have created a cold fiery substance just as he can raise the dead and heal the lame. The order that God created is thus utterly contingent on his absolute power. Even though he has chosen to create this universe – the one containing white snow and hot fire – he has created nothing in it that he cannot change at will. An implicit assumption here (one that Gassendi makes explicit elsewhere²⁰) is that there are no essences in the world God created. There are no necessary connections linking fire and heat or whiteness and snow. God could not have made white snow black or hot fire cold, for such combinations of attributes are contradictory. God is only limited by the law of non-contradiction. He could have created substances with properties very different from the ones that

presently exist. And by implication, he is free to do so at any time. This is what Gassendi meant when he said, "There is nothing in the universe that God cannot destroy, nothing that he cannot produce; nothing that he cannot change, even into its opposite qualities."²¹

Second causes, as part of the created order, do not restrict God's freedom, because he can dispense with second causes altogether if he chooses. "Indeed, to the extent that an artisan has ingenuity, to that extent his work requires less matter and services; thus the divine artisan will be the most skilled since he requires neither matter nor ministers nor organs nor equipment."²² "He is truly free, since he neither is confined by anything nor imposes any laws on himself which he cannot violate if he pleases . . . Therefore, God . . . is the most free; and he is not bound as he can do whatever . . . he wishes."²³ The natural order, which God created by his absolute power, is utterly contingent on his will.

Nominalism was one important implication of Gassendi's voluntarism. The existence of universals, even universals created by God, would limit God's freedom of action. Gassendi's voluntarism and anti-essentialism played a central role in his debate with Descartes over the *Meditations*.²⁴ These assumptions permeated every part of Gassendi's philosophy.

Logic

Presented as a complete philosophy to replace Aristotelianism, the *Syntagma philosophicum* is divided into three sections, entitled "Logic," "Physics," and "Ethics."²⁵ Part I of the *Syntagma philosophicum* is entitled "Logic." Gassendi considered logic to be the art of thinking well. He developed logic as a theory of knowledge and a primitive psychology to explain how ideas get into the mind rather than as a study of the forms of syllogism and the relationships among propositions, although he discussed these topics as well. He adopted an empiricist approach to knowledge of the world, one modelled on the Epicurean canon.

In his first publication, the *Exercitationes Paradoxicæ Adversus Aristoteles* (1624), Gassendi attacked Aristotelian methods in philosophy as overly complex and abstruse. He rejected Aristotelian dialectic as useless as a method for making new discoveries. He appropriated sceptical arguments from the recently recovered *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* by Sextus Empiricus to sensory experience, and questioned whether it could be used as a source of knowledge about the world. Because sensory experience was the source for the premises in Aristotelian demonstration, Gassendi argued that syllogisms starting from these premises could not produce certainty about the world. Moreover, because the conclusion of a syllogism contains no information not already present in the premises, he argued that syllogistic demonstration alone cannot produce new knowledge. Thus, he concluded, the entire method of Aristotelian demonstration lacks both foundation and utility.²⁶

Not satisfied with the suspension of judgement advocated by the ancient sceptics, Gassendi opted for a middle way, which Popkin called “mitigated scepticism.”²⁷ Mitigated scepticism uses the sceptical arguments to rule out the possibility of certain knowledge, while settling for probability as a sufficient goal for knowledge of the world. Gassendi based this approach on a series of rules or canons, which he borrowed from Epicurus. These canons defined sensations, ideas, propositions, and syllogisms, upon which Gassendi elaborated a criterion of truth, based on empiricist assumptions.²⁸

Like other empiricists, Gassendi founded his theory of knowledge on the claim that all ideas contained in the mind originate in the senses. He distinguished between two kinds of truth, which he called “truth of existence” and “truth of judgment.” Truths of existence refer to the content of sensation itself. The senses are infallible insofar as we consider sensations to be simply what they are without further reference. The taste of honey is the taste of honey, whether or not the substance tasted is really honey or even exists. Truths of judgment, in contrast to truths of existence, are the judgments we make about sensations. They are fallible, since they make assertions about the world that might not be true. An example of such a judgment would be the proposition that honey is sweet. The sceptical arguments, according to Gassendi, apply to truths of judgment, not to truths of existence.²⁹

On the basis of this distinction between truths of existence and truths of judgment, Gassendi argued that sensations, which he called “appearances,” provide the grounds for our knowledge of the world. Because this knowledge is confined to how things affect our senses, it tells us nothing about the way things really are in themselves. On the basis of the appearances, however, we can generate causal explanations, with the understanding that such reasoning is always conjectural and subject to revision in the face of further knowledge. This science of appearances is at best probable, and never certain, but such probability is adequate for our needs in this world.³⁰ Gassendi’s probabilistic analysis of the epistemic goal of natural philosophy entailed the rejection of the Aristotelian and Scholastic conception of *scientia*, or demonstrative knowledge.

Physics

The “Physics” is the longest part of the *Syntagma philosophicum*, reflecting the fact that natural philosophy was Gassendi’s primary interest. Here Gassendi laid down the basic principles of his natural philosophy, and then attempted to show that all the phenomena in the world could be explained according to these principles. He divided the “Physics” into three large sections covering the entire created world: “On the Nature of Things in General,”³¹ “On Celestial Things,”³² and “On Earthly Things.”³³ Although he built his physics on the principles of Epicurean atomism, he treated topics in the same order as they appear in Aristotle’s *libri naturales*.³⁴

Gassendi claimed that the ultimate constituents of the world are atoms and the void. He stated that the entire universe is contained in empty space. The question of the existence of the void – highly controversial at the time – led him into a discussion of space and time more generally. Rejecting traditional Aristotelian arguments against the existence of the void, he used the ideas of the Renaissance Platonist Francesco Patrizi (1529–1597) to argue that space is neither substance nor accident, but rather a kind of incorporeal extension.³⁵ He thus avoided what he regarded as Aristotle's error of confounding dimensionality and corporeality. Space, according to Gassendi, exists whether or not it is filled with matter.

Gassendi used both classical arguments, drawn from Lucretius and others, as well as experimental results from seventeenth-century natural philosophy to defend the existence of the void. He regarded the extra-cosmic void as the boundless, incorporeal extended space in which God created the universe. To defend the existence of interstitial void between the atoms, Gassendi appealed to the ancient argument that the existence of void is a necessary condition for motion, for without empty spaces, there would be no place into which particles of matter could move.³⁶ Other classical arguments – many taken from Lucretius³⁷ – included the fact that substances differ in density, that water has the capacity to become saturated with salt, that dyes disperse through water, and that light, heat, and cold, all of which he assumed to be particulate, penetrate air. Empty spaces between the particles composing material bodies seemed necessary to explain these phenomena.³⁸ Hero of Alexandria (fl. 62 A.D.) provided arguments for the void as well. Hero had argued that just as individual grains of sand are separated from each other by air or water, so the material particles composing bodies are separated by small void spaces. Hero had demonstrated the compressibility of air by means of several inventions, including the pneumatic cannon and the aeolipile (a prototype of the steam engine), which seemed to call for the existence of interstitial void between the material particles composing air.³⁹

Gassendi supplemented these classical arguments with experimental evidence from contemporary natural philosophy – especially the barometric experiments of Evangelista Torricelli (1608–1647) and Blaise Pascal (1623–1662). Gassendi explained the suspension of mercury in the barometer as being caused by atmospheric pressure, and thus rejected the Aristotelian explanation, which appealed to the paradigmatic occult quality – nature's abhorrence of the vacuum. He also argued that the space in the tube above the mercury is actually devoid of matter.⁴⁰

Atoms moving in empty space are the material principle in Gassendi's world. All atoms are made from the same kind of matter, which possesses the primary qualities fullness, solidity, and hardness.⁴¹ They are indivisible and too small to be perceived directly. Gassendi borrowed arguments directly from Lucretius to establish the existence of these atoms. Wind, which

is invisible matter, can produce visible physical effects. Paving stones and ploughshares wear away as the result of constant rubbing, even though individual acts of rubbing produce no perceptible changes. Consequently there must exist particles of matter smaller than any we can perceive. The fact that odors pass through the air can be explained in terms of tiny particles travelling from the source of the odor to the nose. Their small size seemed to be confirmed by means of observations using the recently invented microscope, as well as traditional observations such as the dispersion of pigment in water and the large quantity of smoke emitted by a smouldering log.⁴² Zeno's paradoxes establish the absurdity of the idea of the infinite divisibility of matter, thereby providing a powerful argument to defend the claim that the smallest particles of matter must be indivisible.⁴³

Having established to his own satisfaction that atoms and the void are the ultimate components of the world, Gassendi investigated the nature of causality in the world. The first cause is God, who created the world, including the atoms and the laws that govern their motions.⁴⁴ Second causes – the natural causes operating in the physical world – are the collisions among atoms moving in void space. In contrast to Epicurus, who had claimed that an endless series of worlds is constantly being produced by an eternal series of chance collisions among an infinite number of uncreated atoms, Gassendi argued that the world and its constituent atoms – a large, but finite number of them – had been created by God, who continues to rule the world providentially, with special providence for humankind. Rejecting the random swerve of atoms, or *clinamen*, that Epicurus had introduced to account for the collision of atoms that would otherwise fall only downward in parallel paths, Gassendi maintained that in the beginning, God created the motions of atoms. He appealed to an extended argument from design to demonstrate God's providential relationship to the creation. One aspect of his argument from design was his insistence that there is a role for final causes in natural philosophy.⁴⁵

Gassendi went on to demonstrate how all of the qualities of bodies can be explained by drawing on the ultimate terms of explanation of his atomism – the motions and configurations of their constituent atoms. He listed all the qualities of bodies – including rarity and density, transparency and opacity, size and shape, smoothness and roughness, heaviness and lightness, fluidity and firmness, moistness and dryness, softness and hardness, flexibility and ductility, flavor and odor, sound, light, and color – and showed how they could be explained in terms of the configurations, motions, and collisions of atoms.⁴⁶ He then turned to the so-called occult qualities, and argued that because there is no action at a distance in the world, even apparently occult qualities such as magnetism, the sympathies and antipathies favored by the Renaissance naturalists, and the Paracelsian weapon salve can be explained in mechanical terms.⁴⁷

In this first section of the “Physics” – “On the Nature of Things in General” – Gassendi outlined his version of a mechanical philosophy of nature in which all phenomena in the physical world were to be explained in terms of atoms and the void. As a Christianised version of Epicurean atomism, his mechanical philosophy was designed to replace Aristotle’s *Physics*. His work paralleled Aristotle’s *libri naturales: Physica, De caelo, Meteorologica, De partibus animalium*, and *De anima*, also taking account of recent developments in natural philosophy. Often his reach outstripped the grasp of a purely mechanical philosophy. Borrowing freely and writing eclectically, he often appealed to concepts and terms drawn from such non-mechanical philosophies as Aristotelianism, Renaissance naturalism, and alchemy. Thus his actual explanations of particular phenomena frequently violated his own mechanical principles.⁴⁸

In the second section of the “Physics,” dealing with celestial things, Gassendi considered a number of astronomical and cosmological topics: the substance of the sky and stars; the variety, position, and magnitude of the stars; the motions of the stars; the light of the stars; comets and new stars; and the effects of the stars. Although Gassendi had endorsed the new Copernican astronomy enthusiastically in his youth, the condemnation of Galileo in 1633 dampened his enthusiasm, at least in print. In the *Syntagma Philosophicum*, he expressed sceptical doubts about being able to prove any of the three main world systems – Ptolemaic, Copernican, and Tychonic – conclusively, and he proposed the system of Tycho Brahe as a compromise approved by the Church, but not before having stated that the Copernican theory was “more probable and evident.”⁴⁹ Such probabilism characterized his approach to all natural philosophy, and did not represent a retreat in the face of ecclesiastical oppression.⁵⁰

Gassendi adamantly opposed astrology as “inane and futile,”⁵¹ denying the possibility that the stars cause terrestrial and human events. The configurations of the heavens may be signs of some events on earth, such as the seasons or the weather, but they do not cause terrestrial events. Only God can prognosticate the future. Gassendi considered birth horoscopes ridiculous. Why, he asked, should the heavenly bodies have more influence at the moment of birth than at any other moment in a person’s life? He rejected the principles of astrology as being based on insufficient evidence, and he thought that astrologers often resorted to deceit.⁵²

Turning to terrestrial phenomena, Gassendi started with inanimate things. He described the physical geography of the Earth, the distribution of water and land, the tides, subterranean heat, and the saltiness of the sea.⁵³ He then turned to “meteorological” phenomena, including winds, rain, snow, ice, lightning and thunder, rainbows and parhelia, and the Aurora Borealis.⁵⁴ He wrote about stones and metals, noting recent observations of the magnet – particularly those of Nicholas Cabeo (1585–1650) and Anathasius Kircher (1602–1680) – and the transmutation of metals, giving

the process an atomistic explanation.⁵⁵ Finally, he included plants among inanimate things, following Epicurus, who had believed that they lack souls.⁵⁶ He described the varieties of plants and their parts and discussed a wide range of topics, including grafting, nutrition, germination, growth, and death.⁵⁷

In the final section of the “Physics,” Gassendi turned to terrestrial living things, or animals. Here he considered the varieties of animals,⁵⁸ the parts of animals – which he described in explicitly finalistic terms,⁵⁹ and various physiological topics including generation, nutrition, respiration, motion, and the uses of the parts of animals.⁶⁰ His emphasis on final causes, which drew heavily on Aristotle and Galen, is especially noteworthy as part of his concern with divine providence and the argument from design. Gassendi devoted about half of this lengthy section on animals to the topics of sensation, perception, and the immortality of the human soul. These topics are particularly significant, not only because they are related to fundamental issues in epistemology and metaphysics, but also because they stipulate the limits of mechanization in Gassendi’s philosophy of nature.⁶¹

Gassendi’s argument for the immortality of the soul was central to his Christianisation of Epicureanism, for Epicurus had denied the existence of an immaterial and immortal soul. Unlike his ancient model, Gassendi was not a materialist.⁶² Although he adopted the distinction between *anima* and *animus* directly from Lucretius, Gassendi argued that the *anima*, or sentient soul, is material and present throughout the body, but that the *animus* or rational soul is incorporeal.⁶³ Humans resemble animals in possessing an *anima*, but they differ from animals by possessing an *animus*.

He believed that the *anima* – the principle of organization and activity for the organism and the source of the animal’s vital heat⁶⁴ – is composed of very subtle and extremely active atoms, “like the flower of matter.”⁶⁵ It is responsible for perception: it is the physical organ, the imagination or “phantasy,” which forms images derived from perception. The *anima* is transmitted from generation to generation at the moment of conception.⁶⁶

The *animus*, or rational soul, is an incorporeal substance, created by God. It is infused in the body and functions like an informing form. Gassendi argued for its immortality by showing that its immortality follows from its incorporeality. He appealed to several arguments in support the incorporeality of the rational soul. We know that it is distinct from the corporeal imagination or phantasy because we can understand some things of which we cannot form images – for example, the fact that the sun is 160 times larger than the earth.⁶⁷ Unlike material things, the rational soul is capable of reflecting on itself. It is also able to reflect on abstract questions such as the nature of universality. Animals that possess only the corporeal *anima* are limited to forming universal concepts without having the ability to reflect on them abstractly.⁶⁸ The incorporeality of the rational soul established one of the boundaries of Gassendi’s mechanisation of the world.⁶⁹

According to Gassendi, the immortality of the rational soul follows from its immateriality. He considered this topic to be the “crown of the treatise” and the “last touch of universal physics.”⁷⁰ Although “the Sacred Faith” assured him of the soul’s immortality, he supported this article of faith using philosophical and physical arguments. This discussion was his response to the Fifth Lateran Council’s call on philosophers in 1513 “to use all their powers, including natural reason, to defend the immortality of the soul.”⁷¹ Even though the conclusions drawn from physics and philosophy could at best be highly probable, Gassendi was certain of the soul’s immortality because it was ultimately grounded in faith.

Gassendi argued on the basis of physics that the soul is immortal because it is immaterial. As an immaterial thing it “also lacks mass and parts into which it can be divided and analysed.”⁷² Kenelm Digby (1603–1665) and Henry More (1614–1687) used similar arguments in their discussions of the immortality of the soul.⁷³ In addition to this physical argument, Gassendi used what he called a “moral argument” on the grounds that the just punishment and rewards in the afterlife are necessary in order to compensate for various injustices in this life.⁷⁴ He argued against many detractors of the soul’s immortality, especially Epicurus, against whose arguments he devoted an entire chapter of the *Syntagma Philosophicum*. Epicurus had claimed that the soul is material and mortal in order to eliminate the main obstacles to tranquillity.⁷⁵

Ethics

Gassendi completed his Christianisation of Epicureanism in the “Ethics,” the third and final part of the *Syntagma philosophicum*. Epicurean ethics was founded on the principle that pleasure is the end of life. Pleasure, according to Epicurus, consists of freedom from bodily pain and freedom from mental turmoil. The greatest pleasure, tranquillity of the soul, results from the absence of both anxiety and physical pain. The achievement of tranquillity endows individuals with self-sufficiency. Epicurus recognized that not all pleasures are of equal value: reason has the role of calculating pleasure and pain.⁷⁶ Thus he could claim that long-term pleasure was of greater value than short-term pleasure that might lead to long-term pain. Human freedom, necessary for the implementation of the calculus of pleasure and pain, is insured by the random swerve of atoms, which added a dimension of indeterminism to human experience.⁷⁷ Epicurean hedonism – an ethics based on the pleasure principle – was not warmly received in either antiquity or the Christian Middle Ages because of Epicurus’ reputation for atheism and moral decadence.⁷⁸ Gassendi undertook the task of restoring and Christianising Epicurean ethics.

Gassendi reinterpreted the concepts of pleasure and human action in specifically Christian terms, thereby creating a Christian hedonism that

found a natural place in his providential worldview.⁷⁹ Gassendi distinguished among four approaches to pleasure: the instinctive desire for pleasure that even irrational creatures possess; the calculated strategy of maximizing physical pleasure; the prudence of the wise, who understand that true pleasure consists of tranquillity and the absence of pain; and finally the recognition that the most sublime pleasure is to be found in the beatific vision of God.⁸⁰ The prudence of the wise is based on recognition of the vanity of most human desires. The wise person will employ the calculus of pleasure and pain to figure out how best to achieve the state of tranquillity. Gassendi combined this hedonistic ethics with his providential worldview by claiming that God has instilled in humans a natural desire for pleasure and a natural aversion to pain. In this way, God guides human choices, without negating free will. The prudent pursuit of pleasure will ultimately lead to the greatest pleasure of all, the beatific vision of God in heaven.⁸¹

Reflecting his voluntarist theology, Gassendi's "Ethics" presumed both divine and human freedom. Human freedom is a necessary consequence of voluntarism, for if human actions were completely determined, God's freedom to intervene in their lives would be limited. True freedom, *libertas*, is the freedom of indifference, the ability to make judgements and take action without being determined in one direction or another. *Libertas* gives reason a central role in moral deliberation. Gassendi contrasted *libertas* with *libentia* – spontaneity or willingness – that is characteristic of boys, brutes, and stones, creatures that are impelled to move in certain ways, but not on the basis of judgements deriving from the freedom of indifference.⁸²

Gassendi's emphasis on freedom, both human and divine, led him to consider the question of predestination, one of the most important contexts for discussions of freedom and determinism in the post-Reformation setting. How can human action be free if God has foreknowledge of who will be saved and who will be damned? Influenced by the Jesuit Luis de Molina's (1535–1600) moderate stance on the question of predestination, Gassendi argued that God created people free to choose, even though in his omniscience he knows how they will choose. Gassendi, following Molina, claimed that such divine foreknowledge does not interfere with human freedom. In a further defence of human freedom, Gassendi rejected both Stoic fatalism and astrology.⁸³

Gassendi developed a political philosophy based on the idea of *pactum*, or contract, as a natural consequence of his hedonistic ethics. Starting from the idea of a hypothetical state of nature in which there was no secure ownership of property – a state that would inevitably degenerate into turmoil and conflict – Gassendi argued that individuals could secure greater happiness for themselves by forming societies than by experiencing the turmoil that would result from a degenerating state of nature. By establishing

contracts in which both individual rights and property rights are defined, and in which the weaker are protected from the stronger, people form societies to protect themselves. The contracts establish rights, which Gassendi considered natural in the sense that they follow from the calculus of pleasure and pain. Civil society is thus a natural outcome of human nature. A system of justice comes into being to restore rights that have been violated, and to prevent further violations. Among the traditional forms of government, Gassendi favored monarchy as simpler and more efficient than the other traditional forms of government. However, he argued that the power of the monarch remains answerable to the consent of the governed who first established the contract. He was therefore opposed to absolutism on the grounds that an absolute monarch would have severed his relationship with the governed, and was consequently answerable to no one.⁸⁴

Conclusion

Gassendi's Epicurean project reveals him to be a mitigated humanist. On the one hand, he used Lucretius as his ancient model, and appropriated key ideas from him; on the other, he did not accept this model uncritically. To supplement his use of humanist methods, Gassendi advocated an empiricist methodology for natural philosophy. He often appealed to empirical and even experimental results to support his arguments. Although he used an ancient model, in terms of which he worked out his philosophical position, he was not simply a humanist. He was a powerful advocate of post-Copernican natural philosophy; he was also deeply educated in scholastic philosophy, and held thoroughly articulated theological views. Despite the humanist appearance of his text, his own voice can be heard judging the very classics he cited to lend authority to his views. In this way, he was transitional – not wholly a reviver of ancient texts, but not quite cutting “the cord that tied philosophy to humanism.”⁸⁵

Gassendi's philosophy was known and admired for many generations after his death. In the early years of the American Republic, Thomas Jefferson told John Quincy Adams that “the Epicurean philosophy came nearest to the truth . . . of any system of ancient philosophy, but . . . it had been misunderstood and translated. . . . I mentioned Lucretius. He said that was only a part – only the natural philosophy. But the moral philosophy was only to be found in Gassendi.”⁸⁶ Gassendi's reputation has not mirrored his influence, and he does not occupy a prominent place among the canonical figures of early modern philosophy comparable to Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, and Leibniz. One salient reason for his relative neglect is his literary style, a late example of the Renaissance humanism soon to be replaced by Cartesian clarity and “the Historical, plain Method” advocated by Locke.⁸⁷

The construction of modern philosophy resulted in obliterating the memory of one of its most important creators.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Doug Hutchinson for his learned comments on this chapter.
2. On the concept of appropriation as a historiographical tool, see Peter Barker (1996) and Osler (2000b).
3. See Jason Lewis Saunders (1955). Lipsius gave a systematic presentation of Stoic natural philosophy, *Physiologiae Stoicorum Libri Tres* (Antwerp, 1604). Its Stoicism notwithstanding, this book is comparable in scope to Gassendi's *Syntagma philosophicum* and other early presentations of the mechanical philosophy such as Kenelm Digby's *Two Treatises* (1644), Walter Charleton's *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana* (1654), and Thomas Hobbes' *De corpore* (1655). See also J.H.M. Salmon (1989). [See also A.A. Long's Chapter 1 in this volume. (eds.)]
4. See Jill Kraye (1988), esp. 374–386; and Howard Jones (1989), chap. 6.
5. I follow Paul O. Kristeller here in defining Renaissance humanism, not in terms of a particular philosophical view, but in terms of the regard for the authors of classical Greece and Rome; see his (1979), 24–5: "It was the novel contribution of the humanists to add the firm belief that in order to write and to speak well it was necessary to study and to imitate the ancients." See also his (1988). On the interpretation of Renaissance humanism, see W.K. Ferguson (1948). For the various historical interpretations of humanism in modern scholarship see D. Weinstein (1972). See also J. Kraye (1996b). On Gassendi's humanism and its difference from the earlier humanism of Lorenzo Valla, see Lynn S. Joy (1992) and (1987), chaps 1–4; and Barry Brundell (1987), 48–51.
6. Gassendi to Pybrac, April 1621, in Gassendi, *Opera omnia*, vol. 6, 1.
7. Bernard Rochot (1944), 2, 22ff. and 34–40. See also Rochot's 1959 edition and translation of the *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos*, pp. 14–15; and *Opera omnia*, vol. III, 103–4.
8. Lisa T. Sarasohn (1996). See also Gianni Paganini (1989–90).
9. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. I, 30.
10. Ibid.
11. Fred Michael (1992).
12. For further details, see Osler (1994), 42–48.
13. Rochot (1944).
14. Osler (1994), chaps. 2–4 and 8.
15. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 308.
16. Ibid., 381; also 284.
17. Ibid., 309.
18. Ibid., 318.
19. Ibid., vol. 2, 851
20. See Osler (1994), chap. 4.
21. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 308.
22. Ibid., 317.
23. Ibid., 309.

24. See Osler (1994), chap. 6.
25. In the *Syntagma Philosophicum*, Gassendi discussed at some length the parts of philosophy, and the question of the proper order of those parts. See Gassendi, *Syntagma Philosophicum*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, 26. He adopted the order that Diogenes Laertius attributed to Epicurus. See D.L. X.30.
26. Gassendi, *Exercitationes*.
27. Popkin (1979), chap. 7.
28. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 91–124.
29. *Ibid.*, 67–8.
30. Gassendi, *Exercitationes*, 498–505; *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, 206–7.
31. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 125–494.
32. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 495–752.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 1–658.
34. Osler (2002).
35. John Henry (1979).
36. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 182–3.
37. See Rouse and Smith's (1982) translation, I, 329–417.
38. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 196.
39. *Ibid.*, 192.
40. *Ibid.*, 197–216.
41. *Ibid.*, 229–56.
42. *Ibid.*, 259. See Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, I, 265–328 (Rouse and Smith trans.).
43. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 258 and 263–6. Joy (1987), chap. 7, discusses the issue of infinite divisibility at some length.
44. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, pp. 283–337.
45. For an account of Gassendi's views on causality, see Osler (2000c).
46. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 372–457.
47. *Ibid.*, 449–57.
48. Osler (2001).
49. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 617.
50. Brundell (1987), chap. 2.
51. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 854.
52. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 712–52.
53. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 1–62.
54. *Ibid.*, 63–111.
55. *Ibid.*, 112–43.
56. *Ibid.*, 144–5.
57. *Ibid.*, 144–92.
58. *Ibid.*, 193–214.
59. *Ibid.*, 215–326.
60. *Ibid.*, 260–327.
61. *Ibid.*, 328–658.
62. Gassendi's argument that the rational soul is immaterial and immortal provides evidence that he was not a materialist, despite arguments to the contrary by some scholars, notably Olivier René Bloch. Bloch bases his claim that Gassendi defended the immateriality of the rational soul only in deference to the Church on two claims: that Gassendi ascribed many aspects of cognition to the material *anima*, and that he did not fully articulate his arguments for an immaterial

animus until 1642. Bloch's interpretation of Gassendi as a clandestine materialist belies the fact that Gassendi's assertion of the existence of God, angels, demons, and an immaterial immortal soul is to be found throughout his Epicurean writings. These topics appear as early as a manuscript outline of his Epicurean project, which he sent to Peiresc in 1631 at the inception of his project, in his letters to Valois in the 1640s, and in the posthumous *Syntagma philosophicum*. See Bloch (1971), 430 and 476–81.

63. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 237–59 and 620–58.
64. *Ibid.*, 250–1.
65. *Ibid.*, 250.
66. *Ibid.*, 252.
67. *Ibid.*, 440.
68. *Ibid.*, 442.
69. See Osler (1994), 59–77.
70. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 620.
71. Osler (1994), 62.
72. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 628.
73. See Kenelm Digby, *Two Treatises in One of which The Nature of Bodies; in the other The Nature of Mans Soule; is looked into: in Way of Discovering, of the Immortality of Reasonable Soules* (Paris: Gilles Blaizot, 1644; facsimile reprint, New York: Garland, 1978), 350, and Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul, So Farre Forth As It Is Demonstrable from the Knowledge of Nature and the Light of Reason* (London: 1662); facsimile reprint in Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (1662), 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1978), 21.
74. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 631–2.
75. *Ibid.*, 633–49.
76. Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus," §127–32 (= L-S 21B).
77. See Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2., 102–57.
78. Jones (1989), chaps. 4 and 5.
79. The only major study of Gassendi's "Ethics" is Sarasohn (1996).
80. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 659–735.
81. Sarasohn (1996), chap. 3.
82. Gassendi, *Syntagma philosophicum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, 821–827.
83. Osler (1994), chap. 3; and Sarasohn (1996), chap. 5.
84. Sarasohn (1996), chap. 7.
85. Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt (1992), 285.
86. Quoted in Sarasohn (1996), 207.
87. John Locke (1975), 44.

Locke's Offices

Phillip Mitsis¹

There is a curious moment in Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) when he turns to the question of what discourses on ethics a young English gentleman in the making should be encouraged to read. This is a question of some importance, one would have thought, in a treatise whose stated goal is an education to virtue and service to one's country, especially given Locke's claim that education "is that which makes the great difference in mankind." "... of all the men we meet with," he says, "nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education" (&1). But the brevity of his treatment here – earlier in the treatise he has spent at least ten times as long on proper methods of toilet training and five times as long on the question of whether children should be allowed to eat melons and plums or apples and pears – as well as the brevity of his actual reading list, occasion some surprise. Indeed, Locke explicitly recommends reading just two books in the sphere of morality:

The knowledge of virtue, all along from the beginning, in all the instances he is capable of, being taught him, more by practice than rules; and the love of reputation, instead of satisfying his appetite, being made habitual in him; I know not whether he should read any other discourses of morality, but what he finds in the Bible; or have any system of ethics put into his hand, till he can read Tully's Offices, not as a school-boy to learn Latin, but as one who would be informed in the principles and precepts of virtue, for the conduct of his life (&185).

Even allowing for the primary beneficiaries of this advice – budding English gentlemen – we might think that Locke's list is rather slim. But more important, one may well wonder how, armed with these two texts in particular, anyone² could hope to formulate a set of coherent and sufficiently well-grounded moral principles and precepts of the sort needed to embark on the business of being a virtuous member of civil society. Minimally, for Locke, civic virtue involves obeying society's laws, of course, and it also requires attempting to serve one's fellow citizens to one's utmost, since, as Locke puts

it, such service is “an indispensable duty which separates men from cattle” (*STE*, preface). A further prerequisite for virtue, however, is some understanding of the principles that guide one’s obedience and service to society, and it is this demand especially that raises questions about Locke’s choice of these two texts.

If I take to heart the principles of virtue I find in Cicero’s *De Officiis*, I am supposed to view myself, above all, as part of a larger rational community that includes not only all men but the gods as well. This natural community is bound by the rational dictates of divine law, and my reason for obeying those dictates is that they furnish me with principles and precepts of virtue that not only help me to best fulfill my own rational nature and achieve my own happiness and ultimate good, but they also impel me to benefit my fellow rational creatures. Juxtapose this view of the grounding principles of our conduct with some central commitments of Locke that he takes to be rooted in a biblical conception of moral motivation, and it is hard to suppress the thought that at least with respect to our budding gentlemen’s moral diet, Locke seems to be getting his plums and apples confused. For Locke, the law of nature is not to be identified with right reason; rather, it is simply a declaration of God’s superior will. In his earlier *Essays on the Law of Nature*, for instance, Locke explicitly distinguishes his own view from that of the Stoics and Cicero, claiming that . . . “reason does not so much lay down and decree this law of nature as it discovers and investigates a law which is ordained by a higher power . . .” “Nor is reason the maker of this law, but its Interpreter – unless we are willing to diminish the dignity of the supreme lawgiver and attribute to reason that received law which it only investigates” (*An Detur Morum Regula sive Lex Naturae; Essays on the Law of Nature I*).

So, too, Locke’s account of our reasons for obeying God’s will run directly counter to one of the most strongly held principles of Cicero’s *De Officiis*. Cicero begins and ends his advice to Marcus with an attack on hedonism, a doctrine that, he says, one must fight “with horse and foot” (*Off.* 3.116) if one is to guard and preserve the virtues, since “all pleasure is contrary to honourableness (*honestas*)” and it undermines human sociability, liberality, friendship, and even courteousness (*Off.* 3.118). For Locke, of course, things “are good and evil, only in reference to pleasure and pain” (*Essay* ii.xx.2). But matters get even worse. None of the ancient hedonists Cicero attacks ever had the temerity to actually try to ground the pursuit of pleasure in the workings of divine providence itself, as Locke does. Thus, one can only imagine Cicero’s response to the following claim from Book two, chapter vii of the *Essay*:

Beyond all this, we may find another reason why God hath scattered up and down several degrees of pleasure and pain, in all the things that environ and affect us; and blended them together in almost all that our thoughts and senses have to do with; – that we, finding imperfection, dissatisfaction, and want of complete happiness, in

all the enjoyments which the creatures can afford us, might be led to seek it in the enjoyment of Him with whom there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore (ii.vii.5).

Moreover, when in His infinite wisdom and goodness, Locke's God joins the perception of pleasure and pain to the objects of our thought so that we are not left "unemployed" and "unmotivated," He does so in a way that would strike, not just Cicero, but even the ancient hedonists themselves as being harmful to our natures and careless of our ultimate good. For Locke, the joys and pleasures of heaven serve as our ultimate hedonic reward, but they are not our *summum bonum* in the sense that they fulfill and perfect our nature or correspond to our final good. Indeed, Locke denies that God's divine law mandates any objective universal content for human pleasure and happiness either in this life or in the next; pleasures and pains are simply subjective states, and he thinks that nothing could be more evident than the fact that such states of pleasure vary widely from individual to individual. The celestial pleasures awaiting at God's right hand are therefore conceived by Locke as being unmixed with any perceptions of pain; they still arise, however, from sources that remain relative to individual tastes, and they offer witness to the irreducible and eternal diversity of human desire.³ This is because Locke takes it as both fundamental and evident that we enjoy our pleasures in different ways and come to associate pleasure and pain with different objects. "Hence it was, I think, that the philosophers of old did in vain inquire, whether *summum bonum* consisted in riches, or bodily delights, or virtue, or contemplation: and they might have reasonably disputed, whether the best relish were to be found in apples, plums, or nuts, and have divided themselves into sects upon it" (*Essay* ii.xxi.56). So much, then, for one of the deepest structuring principles not only of Cicero's *De Officiis*, but of almost all ancient ethics. But Locke's comment here raises a further problem. If it is vain to dispute about whether the best relish is to be found in apples or plums, at least some gentlemen who have undergone the regimen prescribed in *Of Education* might be driven to reflect back on why they were forbidden even any knowledge of the sweet temptations of plums (&20) and encouraged to choke down their apples, if tastes and pleasures "are very different things" to different men (cf. *Essay* ii.xxi.56). Presumably, it was because, as Locke claims, apples "never did any body hurt," whereas plums can be unwholesome. Yet Locke is perfectly prepared to leave the pursuit of health to the whims of an individual's subjective hedonic calculus:

And therefore it was a right answer of the physician to his patient that had sore eyes: – If you have more pleasure in the taste of wine than in the use of your sight, wine is good for you; but if the pleasure of seeing be greater to you than the drinking of wine, wine is naught (*Essay* ii.xxi.55).

Accordingly, given his voluntarism, his hedonistic account of the springs of human action, and his subjectivism about human happiness, it is puzzling that Locke, when thinking how best to mold human desire and behavior through education, singles out a Ciceronian text that furnishes principles for the systematic guidance and understanding of one's moral conduct so deeply contrary to his own and to those he finds in Scripture. One might perhaps point to the relentlessly practical nature of much of his educational regimen, and argue that Locke believes that the real work of education depends on habituating children in the mastery of their appetites – something best effected, he believes, by carefully managing their love of reputation, not by subjecting them to the “learned noise and dust” of book learning and academic dispute. Yet although Locke continually emphasizes that the object of education is to live and not to dispute, and although this particular recommendation of reading in the sphere of morality seems to be given almost grudgingly, he certainly expects the recipients of his training to learn to make moral judgments, since their proper calling is service to their country, for which they need both moral and political knowledge. Such judgments, in turn, require an understanding of how to apply moral precepts to particular moral situations and to relate precepts to their foundational principles.⁴

Clearly there are severe problems facing Locke in this regard arising from his subjectivist and relativist theory of the good. As his early critics complained, his account of moral principles seems to provide no lack of incentive for our obedience without, however, being sufficiently forthcoming about the actual content we need to structure particular moral decisions and give shape to our overall moral and political conduct. But even as our budding English gentleman encounters these difficulties, he faces a number of other epistemological hurdles on the road to furnishing himself with even a minimal set of appropriate moral propositions for regulating his moral life. Locke began the first draft of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1684 (BL; Add. MS 38,771) while he was working concurrently on the *Essay*, and it is clear that the epistemological doctrines of the *Essay* figure in his account of moral development. Children he considers “only as white paper, or wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases” (&216); they are as free of innate moral tendencies as the mind is of intellectual content. In order for them to make progress in moral understanding, they must first be furnished with simple moral ideas and they must begin to observe the connections among these ideas in their experience. First and foremost, and crucial to the course of their future moral lives, Locke says, is having an idea of God imprinted on their minds “by gentle degrees” (&136–7). This “true notion of God, as of the independent Supreme Being, Author and maker of all things, from whom we receive all our good, who loves us, and gives us all things . . .” is best settled in the mind of children, Locke believes, not by abstruse explanations of God's ineffable nature, but by pointing out to them simply that God made all things and “does all manner of good to

those that love and obey him." Reading comes to play a part in the progress of children's moral understanding when they begin to learn to form more complex moral propositions and precepts. To borrow the more technical terminology of the *Essay*, a child begins to construct mixed-mode moral ideas (cf. e.g. III.ix.5). Again, this is to be done, Locke argues, "by gentle degrees" since parents often make the mistake of heaping too many complex rules and precepts on children when they are too young to understand them (&65). Parents and tutors also make the mistake of allowing children, for example, to read too promiscuously in the Bible, a mistake that Locke says is a likely reason that some men have never been able to attain clear and distinct thoughts of religious ideas (&158). Children should only be allowed to read stories such as David and Goliath and Joseph and his brothers so that they absorb easy and plain moral rules such as, "What you would have others do unto you, do you the same unto them" (&159. cf. *STG* ii.5). The tutor, moreover, is to make use of these Biblical exempla and rules not only for reading but also for instruction, and as they become fixed in a child's memory, they begin to serve as "the standing and sacred rules of his life and actions" (&159).

Locke is fairly clear about the kinds of ideas and moral propositions he wants children to gain from their reading of the Bible. He fails to explicitly set out, however, what he thinks is to be gained from a reading of *De Officiis*. His reference to its providing a "system of ethics," though, suggests a further stage of moral understanding that is analogous to how the improvement of one's understanding proceeds in the *Essay*. There, one's understanding improves, and one can competently begin judging the reasoning and coherence of what one hears when one begins to discover the foundations upon which various propositions rest – to see, that is, where any proposition advanced ultimately "bottoms," and to trace out all the intermediate steps. But if this, or something like it, is Locke's intent in his recommendation of the *De Officiis*, it is hard to see how one can hope to take the simple moral propositions that one gains from one's reading of the Bible and "bottom" them in Cicero's text. That God has created us and offers us the hope of eternal reward for our obedience is not, at first blush, the sort of proposition that would seem to have much hope of being grounded in the *De Officiis*. Even if one were able to perform some of the more fanciful interpretive maneuvers on Cicero's text practiced by Locke's contemporaries – think, for instance, of Cudworth's turning Cicero into a proponent of monotheism – it just seems too far-fetched, even with the help of some Cudworthian legerdemain, to suppose that one could find in the *De Officiis* the kinds of foundational principles Locke needs to ground his voluntarism, hedonism, and subjectivism about the good.

An obvious question that presents itself at this point is whether, given these difficulties, we should take Locke's recommendation of Cicero as having any real philosophical import. Surely one might be excused for

wondering if so much heavy weather should be made out of what, for all intents and purposes, appears to be nothing more than a passing comment. Perhaps Locke nodded a little, or maybe he approved of those bits of *De Officiis* in which Cicero says some like-minded things about civility and the overall comportment of gentlemen, hence his endorsement. Or perhaps he merely is indulging in a bit of donnishness which, although potentially misleading, is of the sort that can be excused in someone of his background and set. Subjecting a seemingly innocent and minor display of learning to further examination might reveal something about the man and his times, perhaps, but it hardly seems to license a search for deeper philosophical implications. Of course, judging from standard recent works on Locke, one would hardly seem justified in concluding that Cicero played even a donnishly ornamental role in Locke's thought. The authoritative *Cambridge Companion to Locke*,⁵ for instance, has no entry at all for Cicero, nor for that matter does what is probably the most probing discussion of Locke's moral theory, John Colman's book. Even in the detailed and voluble Cranston,⁶ there is not a single mention. Nathan Tarcov, in his painstaking commentary on *Some Thoughts on Education*, emphasizes Locke's historical milieu,⁷ and briefly touches on our passage; but he quickly segues into a discussion of the importance of Pufendorf for understanding Locke's educational regimen. At best, Cicero sometimes gets the occasional stray mention in discussions of the general historical background to Locke's views on natural law and property. But even there he is treated as one distant historical forerunner among many – distinguished by his antiquity, perhaps, but certainly not viewed as one who was taken by Locke to be an important thinker on these issues, or as someone who had any direct or palpable influence on him.⁸

I will argue that this general effacement of Cicero in Lockean scholarship is a mistake, and not just because it blurs the historical record, though, of course, getting the history straight is sufficient justification in its own right for a reappraisal. That Locke's thought on particular issues was spurred by reading particular Ciceronian texts (there is manifest evidence that it was) or that he was led to express and structure his arguments in ways deeply indebted to Cicero (here too we have ample evidence) are forms of influence that are important if we wish to understand the extent of Cicero's effect on the mind of Locke. But they leave open the further question of whether Ciceronian texts, in addition, actually influenced the nature and content of any of Locke's philosophical doctrines. In what follows, I will be making this stronger kind of claim for Ciceronian influence. When Locke recommends *De Officiis* along with the Bible, it is because it has for him systematic and foundational significance in the sphere of moral education, and the force of its arguments can be felt on the actual content of some of Locke's key doctrines. Cicero's claims are not always welcome, nor are they always smoothly compatible with other views that Locke defends. Indeed, his continuing attraction to Ciceronian claims, even in the face of these

other commitments, at times causes real philosophical difficulties for Locke, and it is not clear that he is always able to free himself from them. But we will misunderstand the nature of these difficulties, both historically and philosophically, if we fail to notice Cicero's direct and palpable influence on Locke's thinking. Or, at least, so I argue. But these are large claims, obviously, and we first need to backtrack a bit in order to look at some of the general evidence for Locke's relation to Cicero, since so far we have seen only one puzzling comment.

In his *Life of John Milton* (1698), John Toland indulges in the following bit of flattery, or at least what in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could still pass for flattery.

John Locke ... must be confessed to be the greatest philosopher after Cicero in the universe; for he is thoroughly acquainted with human nature, well versed in the useful affairs of the world, a great master of eloquence (qualities in which the Roman consul excelled) and like him also a hearty lover of his country, as appears by his treatises of Government and Education, not inferior in their kind to the divinest pieces of Tully (1761 ed., p.136).

It would be interesting to know what Locke thought of this comparison, but it is unclear whether he ever took any particular notice of it. At least, there are no marginalia in the copy he owned, nor did he record any page lists in its back cover, which was his usual practice when something held any particular interest for him.⁹ But given Toland's self-stylization as a free thinker, and given his attempt to enlist Locke's epistemology in support of Deism, it is probably safe to suppose that Locke would have been extremely uneasy about any comparison with Cicero put in terms of religious belief. Perhaps, then, it was out of deference to Locke's sensitivity on this score that Toland makes no reference to what for him was especially telling and important – the similarities between Cicero's and Locke's religion. But in any case, the rest of Toland's comparison serves in many respects as a useful catalogue of Locke's relations to Cicero more generally and to *De Officiis* in particular.

It is likely that Locke was first introduced to *De Officiis* in school at Westminster, but it is hard to know exactly what this initial introduction might have consisted of.¹⁰ In an entry in his projected edition of the complete Cicero, Toland complains that in his day, schoolboys did not actually read Cicero's texts but were merely forced to memorize a few sayings for the purpose of writing themes (*Cicero Illustratus*, 1712, I.231–232). This is a practice that Locke ridicules in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* since it forces a boy to “set his invention on the rack, to say something where he knows nothing, which is a sort of Aegyptian tyranny, to bid them make bricks who have not yet any of the materials” (&171). Locke's vehemence and evident distaste for this practice – as for much else in the commonly used methods of teaching Greek and Latin in his day – no doubt reflect his own

experience both in having to write such themes and later having to mark them at Christ Church.¹¹ Interestingly, the first time we run across a reference to Cicero in Locke's letters is when Locke is nineteen and writing his first important letter to his benefactor Alexander Popham, the man who arranged for him to be admitted to Westminster School (De Beer 6). Locke, in thanking him and asking for another favor, adapts – and massacres the rhythm of – Cicero's famous tag about it being the mark of a grateful disposition to wish to owe even more to one to whom one already owes much (*Ep. ad Fam.* ii.6). Other Ciceronian tags appear throughout Locke's early letters, including Cicero's quotation and defense of his own poetry at *De Officiis* 1.77, "Cedant arma togae, concedant laurea laudi." But even if his boyhood knowledge of Cicero only encompassed a few well known tags, by the time of his Studentship at Christ Church, it is almost certain that Locke was actually reading and teaching the *De Officiis*, where it was the most frequently read work in the undergraduate curriculum, along with another frequently assigned work of Cicero, the *De Oratore*.¹²

We know as well that Locke began buying copies of Cicero's works at this time, his first being Erasmus' famous edition of *De Officiis*, immediately followed by a more recent Dutch edition of it as well. Indeed, by the time of his death, his library would have some nine editions of the *De Officiis*,¹³ including a popular recent translation in English (T. Cockman, London 1699). In fact, no other book figures so prominently in his library, except for the Bible. Similarly, if we exempt the works of Locke himself, the author most frequently represented in his collection overall is Cicero, followed by Boyle.¹⁴ This is significant, since Locke's library was the working library of a scholar, not just a collection of rare and beautiful volumes. As Peter Laslett observes in this respect, as opposed to the medieval period, when books were so scarce that no one could hope to own enough to enable him to work by himself, or our own period where there are so many books available that no one could possess all he needs to do his writing, Locke lived in the heyday of when one could in the privacy of his study "hope to build up for himself a collection of books so complete that nearly all of his work as an author might be done with their aid alone."¹⁵ Such is certainly the case with Locke. Moreover, we know that Locke spent a lot of money – he had a lot to spend – and went to great amounts of trouble to acquire the scholarly editions of works that he needed, not because of their rarity or beauty – something for which he was vaguely contemptuous – but because of their scholarly usefulness. His changing opinions about the value of various editions of Cicero are meticulously recorded, as were his views about almost everything else in his life. Near the end of his life he came to believe, for example (*Thoughts Concerning Reading*), that the 1618 Hamburg edition by Gruyter and Gulielmus was the finest overall, followed by Elzevir's – the latter being an edition he never acquired for himself, but was able to use in the library of his friend Benjamin Furley when he was exiled in Holland (cf. Le Clerc

to Locke, De Beer 1541).¹⁶ The extent of Locke's knowledge as well as his passionate interest in the details of various editions would, I think, be sobering to even the most bookish of contemporary classical scholars. To take just one of many instances: for years, he kept up a correspondence with J.G. Graevius, the Dutch scholar and bookseller who had edited Cicero's letters and was bringing out a complete edition of the speeches and philosophical works as well. One can see in their correspondence an escalating attempt on the part of both men to outdo each other both in their mastery of Ciceronian style and in the breadth of their Ciceronian references, all the while chatting about what editions of classical authors are available, how much they cost, which are the best, and so on (see, for example, De Beer, 1809). Nor is this just an isolated or random occurrence in the more than 1,000 letters of Locke that survive. Rather, it is very much a part of what Toland commends in Locke, both with respect to his eloquence and with respect to his being well-versed in useful affairs of the world. Certainly to a significant extent, the way that Locke structures his friendships and relations more generally in his letters is very much self-consciously modeled on Cicero, and it shares many of the same ethical views and presuppositions about the nature of friendship, liberality, gratitude, decorum, honorableness, and so on.¹⁷ In part, no doubt, this is because letter writing for Locke, as he writes in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, "has so much to do in all the occurrences of human life, that no gentleman can avoid showing himself in this kind of writing" (&189). Letter writing, as well, lays a gentleman "open to a severer examination of his breeding, sense, and abilities, than oral discourses; whose transient faults . . . more easily escape observation and censure." Letters therefore give evidence both of one's eloquence and of one's being versed in useful affairs of the world, and for Locke, it is Cicero's letters that provide the "best pattern, whether for business or conversation" and his *De Inventione* that teaches the "skill and graces" of a proper style (&189).

Of course, Ciceronian "skill and graces of style," a lifetime of correspondence based on Ciceronian models, and nine copies of the *De Officiis* in his library,¹⁸ it might be objected, are perhaps suggestive, and may imply, at best, a variety of vague intellectual affinities here and there, but so what? One can continue multiplying evidence of this sort: the Ciceronian quotation from the *De natura deorum* on the frontispiece of the *Essay*; the fact that as an aged bachelor, Locke gave an expensive copy of the *De Finibus* to his young sweetie; the ability, ascribed to various of Locke's friends and teachers to be able to recite from memory whole works of Cicero, including all three books of the *De Officiis*.¹⁹ And if these appear a bit scattershot and hard to gauge – no doubt they are – among Locke's unpublished manuscripts remain testimonies of an ongoing and deeper engagement with Cicero. We know that Locke worked on a commentary on *De Officiis*, and also that in the last twenty years of his life he was attempting an exact chronology of

Cicero's life and major works. His only other such chronology was of the life of Jesus Christ.²⁰

We still might ask, of course, what does all of this really demonstrate? Is it evidence of a familiarity on Locke's part with, or even fairly developed interest in, say, the writings of a figure who offered both for him and his culture certain sociologically and psychologically useful paradigms for mediating deep religious and political conflicts? No doubt. Or (if we wish to be less wholesome and less theoretically naive) did Cicero provide Locke, either consciously or subconsciously, with historical precedent for justifying and maintaining his own favored elitist social hierarchies? We could argue the point. Or (to take a tack that is more personal) did the trauma of his own exile lead Locke to increasingly identify with another misunderstood patriot and one of history's most eloquent and important exiles? Perhaps. Yet although these are all questions that might resonate in some areas of academia, I very much doubt that anything said so far will convince many of our colleagues in early modern philosophy that they need to begin citing Cicero. This is because, however interesting it is for intellectual historians or psychoanalysts, none of this evidence shows that Cicero had any very precise or meaningful influence on the actual nature and shape of Locke's philosophical arguments, regardless of those nine copies of *De Officiis* sitting in his library at home at Oates or regardless of the hours he spent reading and commenting on his favorite pagan text.

So I want to up the ante a bit and claim that there are several key moments in Locke's moral thinking when he is in danger of getting knocked off what he takes to be his biblical high horse by commitments that he has picked up directly from *De Officiis*. I think this can be shown both in early works, such as the *Essays on the Law of Nature* (1663–4),²¹ as well as in later works, such as the fascinating little essay called the "Venditio" (1695).²² Its subject is modeled directly on Cicero's account in *De Officiis* of a debate between Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater about how a good man, sailing from Alexandria to famine-stricken Rhodes, should act when faced with the possibility of making huge profits from the misery of others (*Off.* iii.50 ff). But since Locke never published either of these works in his lifetime, we should perhaps give him the benefit of the doubt and focus on something he actually did publish.

So let us return to children and the problem of fruit. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke divides education into the following four, at times overlapping, parts: "Virtue, Wisdom, Breeding, and Learning" (& 134), with virtue being "the first and most necessary of those endowments that belong to a man or gentleman, as absolutely requisite to make him valued and beloved by others, acceptable or tolerable to himself. Without that, . . . he will be happy neither in this, nor in the other world" (& 135). As mentioned earlier, Locke believes that, as the foundation of virtue, it is necessary to imprint on young minds a true notion of God – a God "from whom we receive all our good, who loves us, and gives us all things" (& 136). This notion of

God as benign and eminently providential is important for a number of key elements in a child's moral development. This is because such development itself is supposed to go forward in a general atmosphere free from fear and anger, since, in Locke's view, learning to be motivated by fear or to act out of anger or a desire for vengeance will severely undermine one's capacity for exercising one's liberty. Yet, at the same time, we might want to raise some questions about the notion of God that Locke is actually appealing to here. In the first place, there seems to be nothing in Locke's account that is obviously Christian or that depends on the revelation of Scripture.²³ Moreover, Locke pointedly fails to mention either the fear of God or the punishments that befall those who disobey his will. When one compares this, for instance, with passages from one of Locke's later works, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, the difference is all the more telling. In this later work, there is little doubt that Scripture holds out the threat that sinners shall be cast into an eternal furnace of fire and that on the judgment day there shall be much wailing and gnashing of teeth.²⁴ God's just wrath and one's fear of eternal punishment serve as important deterrents to immorality.

Locke's desire to imprint on children's minds a "true notion of God" that is strictly benign and providential is therefore striking. More striking still is the extent to which this picture of divinity corresponds to what we find in *De Officiis*. For Cicero, anger is unsuitable for any rational creature, and as such should be entirely eradicated from our moral lives. He therefore strongly disagrees with Peripatetic justifications of anger (*Off.* 1.89) and argues that it is utterly incompatible with virtuous behavior or with the just administration of law. With respect to the notion that the gods get angry, Cicero claims that "all philosophers, not only the ones who say that a god is free of business himself and imposes none on others, but also those who wish the god to be active and laboring all the time, share the view that he is never angry and never does harm" (*Off.* 3.102). Indeed, not only do the gods never harm us, it is they who are able to bring us the greatest benefits (*Off.* 2.11. cf. *ND* 2 *passim*), and the duties that take precedence over all others, he claims, are those we owe to the gods (*Off.* 1.160). Thus the purely providential and irenic notion of God that Locke thinks serves as a foundational concept of moral education has more in common in these respects with what we find in Cicero than with what we are likely to find in Scripture. But what of the further notion that God loves us and that we should love him in return? We might think that this is something exclusively biblical. However, the notion of divine love is by no means a difficult inference to make from a number of passages in other works by Cicero – for instance, much of Book 2 of *De natura deorum* or Book 5 of *De finibus* (5.65 ff) – that describe the expanding bonds of affection between rational creatures and the care that the gods display in arranging everything in the world for our benefit. Voltaire, for example, repeatedly attributed such a doctrine to Cicero, probably relying on Locke's contemporary, Samuel Clark. Clark thought that Cicero had

discovered, on the basis of natural reason alone, a conception of divine love, and that Cicero had come to advocate the universal love and brotherhood of mankind because of it. Locke certainly knew Clarke's work, and owned several of his books in his library. But it is unclear whether he ever explicitly adopted Clarke's particular view of Cicero, though one certainly can find all the materials for such a view in *De Officiis* as well. As in these other works, Cicero presents in *De Officiis* a doctrine of the fellowship of men and gods (1.153) and of the natural bonds of affection between rational creatures, and he argues that we naturally love all those in whom virtue is seen to reside (1.54; 2.70–75) and who benefit us – the gods, of course, being preeminent on both these scores (cf. 1.126). In a related context, moreover, Cicero quotes Ennius' line, "Whom they fear they hate" (*Off.* 2.23), and argues that gaining another's love provides a much more powerful and effective motive than fear for those from whom one wishes to secure obedience. It would be implausible to claim, no doubt, that Cicero offers an account of divine love that plumbs the deepest nuances of Christian *agapê*. But by the same token it is hardly clear that Locke's simple, true notion of God does any better in this respect. And there is certainly nothing in Cicero, though there is much in Scripture and in the particular biblical stories Locke specifically recommends, to contradict what Locke takes to be fundamental for the development of virtue – that is, the notion of a purely beneficent, loving, and mild divinity. Notice, moreover, the idea that we should come to love God as the one who gives us all good things fits much more smoothly with the Ciceronian notion of a purely reasonable divinity; it sits rather less well, however, with a voluntarist conception of God as a lawmaker who attaches pleasure and pain to rules and whose sanctions we come to understand and obey through divine revelation (cf. *STE* &61, where Locke seems to assert the view that one follows God's dictates by reason). Thus, given one's initial expectations about Locke's attitudes towards the two texts he recommends, such a result, I think, is rather surprising. But it does suggest why Locke thinks that *De Officiis* offers the possibility of systematic guidance – in a way, perhaps, that edifying stories from the Bible do not – about what is after all for Locke the most important foundational principle in the development of a virtuous life – a true notion of God. At the same time, though, it is hardly clear that this "true notion," which, I would argue, is deeply Ciceronian, can support Locke's official version of voluntarism and his claims about the nature of the obedience we owe to the will of God.

Any reader of *De Officiis* and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* is likely to be struck by the patently Ciceronian way that Locke's educational regimen, as he says in another context, "compleat(s) a Man in the Practice of Human Offices" (*De Beer*, 3322) – offices that, at least on the surface, look every bit like a laundry list of those famously advocated by Cicero: liberality, civility, courtesy, kindness, devotion to public life, gratitude, faithfulness, decorum, industry, self-denial and self-sacrifice, courage, and so on, and certainly any

comprehensive account of the influence of *De Officiis* on Locke would need to carefully chart the passages and doctrines from his works that are evidently relying on or reacting to these features of Cicero's arguments.²⁵ Moreover, one would need to keep careful track of Locke's use of Ciceronian exempla, since early on his works are filled with references to, for example, Regulus, Cato, and Curtius. But under the influence of his near mania for contemporary travel literature, he tends to begin decking out what are obviously Ciceronian moral exempla in more exotic garb, though it is fairly obvious that they still owe their origins to passages in *De Officiis*.

Obviously, such a full-scale treatment is beyond the scope of this chapter. So what I want to do instead is to conclude with a final agonistic claim – one that again suggests that Locke's reliance on doctrines he finds in *De Officiis* derail him from what are generally taken to be his official lines – in this case, his accounts of hedonism and the subjectivity of the good. The basic philosophical point my discussion will be turning on is hardly profound or new, and I am not even sure that it is right; nor would I claim that Locke elsewhere does not have the resources for defending himself from what is after all a very common and traditional objection to hedonism.²⁶ My aim, however, is a more limited one: to show that because Locke subscribes to a Ciceronian analysis of certain central moral qualities, he undermines his official views of hedonism and the subjectivity of the good.

For Locke, the aim of education is to instill in individuals a love of virtue, and this is brought about by developing and then manipulating a child's capacity for feeling shame and for desiring the esteem of others. First, however, children must be taught self-denial: "To make a good, wise, and a virtuous man, it is fit he should learn to cross his appetite, and deny his inclination to riches, finery, or pleasing his palate, &c. whenever his reason advises the contrary, and his duty requires it" (§52). There is certainly nothing here which crosses Cicero (cf. *Off.* 1.102) since the subordination of appetite to reason is one of his unending themes. Locke, moreover, stresses in this connection another preoccupation of *De Officiis*, the importance of the approval and disapproval of others. For Locke, a child best learns to deny his appetites, not through what are ordinarily thought of as rewards and punishments, but through praise and blame:

What principle of virtue do you lay in a child, if you will redeem his desires of one pleasure by the proposal of another? This is but to enlarge his appetite, and instruct it to wander. If a child cries for an unwholesome and dangerous fruit, you purchase his quiet by giving him a less hurtful sweetmeat. This perhaps may preserve his health, but spoils his mind, and sets that farther out of order. For here you only change the object; but flatter still his appetite, and allow that must be satisfied, wherein, as I have showed, lies the root of the mischief: and till you bring him to be able to bear the denial of that satisfaction, the child may at present be quiet and orderly, but the disease is not cured. By this way of proceeding you foment and cherish in him that which is the spring, from whence all evil flows; which will be sure on the

next occasion to break out again with more violence, give him stronger longings, and you more trouble (&55).

The rewards and punishments then whereby we should keep children in order are quite of another kind . . . Esteem and disgrace are, of all others, the most powerful incentives to the mind, when once it is brought to relish them. If you can once get into children a love of credit, and an apprehension of shame and disgrace, you have put in them the true principle, which will constantly work, and incline them to the right (&56).

For Cicero, of course, the question of how virtuous behavior appears to others and how it is related to reputation is a central concern of *De Officiis*. Shame is an important indicator of appropriate behavior, for “without shame,” he says, “nothing can be upright, and nothing honorable” (*Off.* 1.148). Moreover, this extends for Cicero, as for Locke, to all areas of behavior and comportment: “let us follow nature and avoid anything that shrinks from the approval of eyes and ears. Let our standing, our walking, our sitting and our reclining, our countenances, our eyes and the movements of our hands all maintain what I have called seemliness (*decorum*)” (*Off.* 1.128). But for Cicero, virtue merits esteem because it is appropriate for man’s rational nature – that is, “just where his nature differs from other creatures” (*Off.* 1.96). Accordingly, virtuous behavior arouses the approval of others as soon as others come to recognize it as such: “For just as the eye is aroused by the beauty of the body because of the appropriate arrangement of limbs, . . . so this seemliness, shining out in one’s life, arouses the approval of one’s fellows, because of the order and constancy and moderation of every word and action” (*Off.* 1.98). Locke, too, at times speaks of the way that particular qualities provoke esteem and admiration, and he uses very similar images: “The actions from a well-formed mind, please us also . . . This seems to me to be that beauty, which shines through some men’s actions, sets off all that they do and takes with all they come near; when by a constant practice they have fashioned their carriage, and made all those little expressions of civility and respect, which nature or custom has established in conversation . . .” (& 66). For both Locke and Cicero, a desire for esteem is not to be equated with the love of virtue itself, but it is “that which comes nearest to it” (&61). However, Locke’s hedonism and subjectivity about the good create an awkwardness for his intended account of the relation between esteem and virtue,²⁷ and make it unclear how he can help himself to several of the tenets he shares with Cicero. Locke argues, for instance, that children find pleasure in being esteemed and valued (&57), and that in order “to make the sense of esteem or disgrace sink the deeper, and be of the more weight, other agreeable or disagreeable things should constantly accompany these different states” (& 58).

But it is part of the logic of shame, as Cicero recognizes, that we do not necessarily experience feelings of disgrace merely because others disapprove

of us; nor do we feel shame for actions that we do not think shameful, even if others show disapproval and try to shame us. Nor does the pleasure we enjoy in being treated with esteem derive solely from the fact that others approve of our actions; it is important that we also believe that our actions actually merit their just approval.²⁸ Locke certainly (cf. &60) recognizes that children must be able to distinguish between the just and unjust disapproval of their actions, and that some of their actions that actually merit the esteem of others may not meet with the esteem that they should (cf. &61ff). He therefore expects children who have been brought up to love virtue to act virtuously even when their virtuous acts meet with the disapproval of others. Cicero, of course, is able to justify such actions because he thinks that we should always pursue virtuous actions, regardless of the circumstances, and that if we recognize an action to be virtuous, it is in our nature to approve of it and then to pursue it. Locke, on the other hand, denies that there are any natural connections or any innate tendencies to link virtue and esteem. A child's esteem for virtue must be inculcated by associating the pleasure of esteem with virtuous actions. Yet, however much Locke makes use of Ciceronian views and needs them to justify actions that merit, but do not actually receive, esteem, his official hedonism and subjectivism about the good cannot explain why it is better for children to take pleasure in actions that merit esteem as opposed to merely taking pleasure in actions that may happen to elicit, but do not deserve, the esteem of others. Here, again, as in the case with his views on divinity, *De Officiis* offers Locke principles for defending and inculcating the kinds of moral qualities that he wants, but at the cost of consistency with other of his views.

I have argued that we should take seriously Locke's claim that Cicero's *De Officiis* provides systematic guidance for understanding and developing the kinds of moral qualities Locke thinks necessary for a virtuous and happy life. It is not clear, however, that Locke was ever able to integrate sufficiently the particular guidance that this text offers with several key doctrines of his own moral thought. Thus, in closing, I want to look at Locke's final recorded comment about *De Officiis*, since it seems to signal a changing view of its particular usefulness. For about the last twenty years of his life, Locke continued recommending the Bible and *De Officiis* in a variety of public and private contexts as the two texts that provide us with proper guidance in the sphere of morals. However, in an extemporaneous discussion dictated to Samuel Bold in the last year of his life and later published posthumously (1720), Locke has the following to say:

The study of morality I have above mentioned as that, which becomes a gentleman, not barely as a man, but in order to his business as a gentleman. Of this there are books enough writ both by ancient and modern philosophers, but the morality of the Gospel doth so exceed them all, that to give a man a full knowledge of true morality, I should send him to no other book, but the New Testament. But if he hath a mind

to see how far the heathen world carried the science, and whereon they bottomed their ethics, he will be delightfully and profitably entertained in Tully's treatises *De Officiis* (*Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman*).

Here Locke registers no doubt about the relation of his two favored texts. *De Officiis* is relegated to the dustbin of history, and holds purely historical interest for those interested in how far the heathen world carried the science of ethics. Locke has jettisoned his earlier claim that it is a text that can provide guidance in the principles and precepts of virtue for the conduct of one's life. Such a deflationary view of Cicero fits with some standard accounts of Locke's development, which see him progressively despairing of reconciling the demands of reason and revelation, and drifting further under the spell of revealed Christianity. Whatever the truth of this general view, it certainly seems to be consonant with his changing attitude towards *De Officiis*. But to the extent that he frees himself from the principles and precepts of that text, it becomes unclear what is to become of the simple ideas of the divine and of the mechanisms of approval by means of which he thinks education best proceeds – and more generally, it thus becomes unclear how he can hope to educate and set right the sort of gentlemen on whom he thinks the order and stability of civil society most depend.

Notes

1. I am indebted to Tony Long for first alerting me to connections between Locke and Cicero, and this chapter is in many ways an extended footnote to his groundbreaking paper (1997). I also would like to thank Peter Koritansky, Jon Miller, Brad Inwood, Jerry Schneewind, Myles Burnyeat, Joe DeFilippo, and Mary Clapinson, Keeper of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
2. See J.W. Yolton (1971), 31, for the claim that Locke's account is meant to cover not just gentlemen, but all men.
3. John Colman (1983), 242–243.
4. On these issues, see the incisive discussion of Colman (1983), 69–75.
5. Chappell (1994).
6. Cranston (1957).
7. Tarcov (1984).
8. The one outstanding exception is Marshall (1994). Marshall gives a massively learned and historically nuanced account of Locke's intellectual development that is now the indispensable starting point for anyone interested in connections between Locke and Cicero. He amasses evidence for the role of Cicero both in Locke's earlier (chapter 5, 157–204) and later (chapter 7, 292–326) social thought, and carefully relates this evidence to a wide range of intellectual and personal influences. Marshall offers evidence that sometimes overlaps with, though often goes far beyond, anything I can offer here. In a few places, I register disagreements of detail, but my own argument is admittedly much more

narrowly focused and certainly does not pretend to do justice to Marshall's larger claims about Locke's milieu and overall development.

9. See Harrison and Laslett (1965), 38, for Locke's general practice in this regard.
10. Marshall (1994), 163–164, argues that much of Locke's life took place within networks of beneficence and gratitude and that *De Officiis* is a work "saturated with the celebration of the exchange of favours." This is true, but it is impossible to know whether (as Marshall seems to optimistically imply) these aspects of *De Officiis* were actually registering on Locke this early on; one needs to take into account not only his own and Toland's caveats, but also, perhaps, Locke's own persistent and self-confessed *opsimathia*.
11. There are some questions about Locke's diligence in this regard. Among the surviving collection of his botanical specimens are many mounted on unmarked themes. See Bill (1988), 250.
12. Bill (1988), 276.
13. See the catalogue in Harrison and Laslett (1965) for an account of which editions Locke had access to at different times of his life.
14. Cf. Marshall (1994), 301, for a somewhat different reckoning.
15. Harrison and Laslett (1965), 1.
16. Marshall (1994), 301ff, for an account of Ciceronian influences during Locke's exile in Holland.
17. Marshall (1994) gives a compelling account of these aspects of the relation of Locke and Cicero; see especially 164ff with n.10.
18. Cf. Marshall (1994), 301.
19. Marshall (1994), 162, for this (implausible) claim about Sanderson.
20. For an account, see Marshall (1994), 301.
21. I believe that even a cursory reading of this work shows Locke continually grappling with Ciceronian texts, and at times he even seems to be paraphrasing Cicero. The best modern scholarly edition is by W.Von Leyden (1965). Although remarkably learned and helpful in many ways, Von Leyden seems to me to systematically gloss over the Ciceronian overtones of Locke's work.
22. Collected in Goldie (1997), 339–42. See also the account of Dunn.
23. See Tarcov (1984), 187.
24. Locke (1794) vol.7, 126.
25. See Marshall (1994), 303–326, for some stimulating remarks in this vein.
26. Though for strong doubts on this score, see Colman (1983), 177–205.
27. Here I follow Colman (1983), 177–205; 228–234.
28. Colman (1983), 177–205.

Patience sans Espérance: Leibniz's Critique of Stoicism

Donald Rutherford

Stoicism casts a long shadow over early modern moral philosophy. In the late sixteenth century, the efforts of Justus Lipsius and Guillaume Du Vair to formulate a coherent Christian Neostoicism sparked a succession of works aimed at assimilating, or rebutting, central claims of Stoic ethical theory.¹ The impact of Stoicism on the major figures of seventeenth-century philosophy, particularly those of the second half of the century, takes a more subtle form. Among these thinkers, there is little interest in confronting Stoic views directly, either to refute them or defend them. Yet Stoicism makes a vital contribution to the ethical theories of a number of later early modern philosophers, including, most prominently, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. The theories of these three philosophers differ significantly in their details and in their proximity to Stoic orthodoxy, yet each involves a creative appropriation of Stoic ideas.²

A growing body of literature relates the ethical views of Descartes and Spinoza to those of the Stoics.³ Much less has been written about the Stoic background to Leibniz's ethics.⁴ In one sense, this is unsurprising, since it is difficult to extract a systematic ethical theory from Leibniz's fragmentary writings. At the same time, the case demands attention, for Leibniz confronts more directly, and more critically, than Descartes or Spinoza the ramifications of Stoicism for morality, and does so in part by identifying his rationalist predecessors as the modern inheritors of the mantle of Stoicism. From this perspective, Leibniz emerges as a consistent critic of Stoic ethics and a defender of Christian piety. I shall argue, however, that this represents a superficial understanding of Leibniz's position – that there is a closer relationship between his views and those of the Stoics than at first appears, and that his disagreement with Stoicism rests as much on philosophical grounds as on theological ones. The most compelling aspect of Leibniz's case against Stoicism centers on the Stoics' failure to offer an adequate explanation of the nature of moral progress and of the dependence of human happiness on

the hope for such progress. Leibniz premises his argument on a conception of virtue that owes much to the Stoics, one based on the perfection of the natural powers of a rational agent. His decisive move comes in linking this notion of virtue to a decidedly non-Stoic conception of happiness as a “lasting pleasure.” With this, Leibniz is able to offer an account of how happiness tracks the progress of human beings toward a state of greater perfection, and why we have good reason to expect to achieve such happiness.

I. The Sect of the New Stoics

Leibniz's confrontation with Stoicism begins not with the Stoics themselves but with Descartes and Spinoza. In an essay composed soon after his move to Hanover in 1676, Leibniz identifies Descartes and Spinoza as leaders of “the sect of the new Stoics,” whose teachings he finds inimical to the interests of sound morality.⁵ Although he absolves these new Stoics of the materialism embraced by followers of Epicurus (here he cites Hobbes), he faults their philosophy on three counts. First, they hold that a “blind necessity” determines God to act: all things follow from God's power alone as opposed to his rational choice, “since, properly speaking, God has neither understanding nor will” (A VI.4, 1385/AG 282). Second, they leave uncertain the immortality of the soul or a future life. Third, they deny that God's actions are answerable to an objective standard of justice. As God “determines what constitutes benevolence and justice” for these philosophers, “he would have done nothing contrary to justice by making the innocent always miserable” (*ibid.*). The upshot, according to Leibniz, is that the new Stoics “admit providence in name only,” and this is what undermines their ethics.

It is clear that the primary target of Leibniz's attack is Spinoza. Time and again, he highlights Spinoza's rejection of contingency, of God's freedom or rational choice, of personal immortality, and of the reality of goodness or perfection as the most serious threats to a universal morality founded on divine justice.⁶ Frequently, Leibniz attempts to cast Descartes as a covert Spinozist and “new Stoic” on these same grounds. “Certainly,” he remarks in the same essay, Descartes “made himself very suspect by rejecting the search for final causes, by maintaining that there is no justice or benevolence, nor even truth, except because God has determined them in an absolute way, and finally by letting slip (though in passing) that all the possible variations of matter happen successively, one after another” (A VI.4, 1386/AG 282). Most interesting about these criticisms is the consequence Leibniz draws from them. Given the new Stoics' account of God's relation to the world – his necessitation of all things – their notion of happiness is limited to the absence of discontent: a soul that is tranquil because it has resigned itself to its fate. For this reason, although it is reached by a different route, what the

new Stoics offer is indistinguishable from the Epicurean goal of tranquility, or *ataraxia*:

As for what is of consequence and what concerns the conduct of our lives, everything reduces to the opinion of the Epicureans, that is, to the view that there is no happiness other than the tranquility of a life here below content with its own lot, since it is madness to oppose the torrent of things and to be discontented with what is immutable. If they knew that all things are ordered for the general good and for the particular welfare of those who know how to make use of them, they would not identify happiness with simple patience (A VI.4, 1385/AG 282).

Leibniz expands on this theme in a 1679 letter to an unknown correspondent. This time he frames his remarks explicitly as part of a general critique of Descartes and Cartesianism. Descartes's ethical doctrines, he argues, are unoriginal. They are a familiar amalgam of Epicurean and Stoic ideas, centered on the principle that we should follow reason, remaining constant in our judgment, and that we should avoid troubling ourselves with things not in our power. This is to act in accordance with virtue, our supreme good, and the pleasure that results from this life is "the tranquility of soul or indifference that both the Stoics and Epicureans sought and recommended under different names" (G IV 298/AG 241).⁷ Because Descartes's ethics gives primary emphasis to the strength of mind that allows one to remain untroubled by the outcomes of fortune, it amounts merely to the "art of patience." Yet this, Leibniz insists, "is not yet everything," for "patience without hope cannot last and scarcely consoles" (*ibid.*). In support of this conclusion, Leibniz returns to his earlier criticism of Descartes's conception of God. Descartes's God "is not a God like the one we imagine or hope for, that is, a God just and wise, doing everything possible for the good of creatures. Rather, [it] is something approaching the God of Spinoza, namely, the principle of things and a certain supreme power or primitive nature that puts everything into motion and does everything that can be done" (G IV 299/AG 242). What is missing in this idea of the divine is an understanding of God as an intelligent agent, acting for the sake of the best ends. Without this, Leibniz claims, there can be no substantial conception of providence, or of God's wise and just governance of the world. This, finally, is

why a God like Descartes's allows us no consolation other than that of patience through strength. . . . It is not necessary to believe that this God cares for intelligent creatures any more than he does for the others; each creature will be happy or unhappy depending upon how it finds itself engulfed in these great currents or vortices. Descartes has good reason to recommend, instead of happiness, patience without hope (*patience sans espérance*) (GP IV 299–300/AG 242).

In his critique of the new Stoics, Leibniz sometimes makes the broad charge, apt in the case of Spinoza, that they reject providence altogether.

At other times, as in the passage just quoted, he focuses on the claim that their philosophy undermines the special justice God exercises with respect to rational beings: the justice whereby virtue is perfectly balanced by happiness and vice by unhappiness. In this context, Leibniz stresses Descartes's failure to defend the principle of justice as an eternal truth independent of God's will, and a notion of personal immortality that incorporates the memory of past deeds. Without memory, he argues, immortality is "completely useless to morality, for it upsets all reward and punishment." The charge that the new Stoics offer a diminished conception of happiness, because they leave no room for hope, follows from their failure to support the requirements of divine justice. For this, providence is not enough. The ascription to God of foreknowledge, and a will to bring about all things for the best, offers no solace to the virtuous person who suffers unjustly or fears for the permanence of her happiness. Without a basis for the hope that she will enjoy happiness in the future, her present state may seem unbearable and her virtue worthless. That is why, Leibniz concludes, "in order to satisfy the hopes of humankind, we must prove that the God who governs all is wise and just, and that he will allow nothing to be without reward and without punishment; these are the great foundations of morality" (GP IV 300/AG 243). In sum, Leibniz constructs the following case against the ethics of the new Stoics. (1) The new Stoics are committed to principles that entail a denial of divine justice. (2) Without a belief in divine justice, there is no basis for the hope that virtue will be rewarded with lasting happiness. (3) Without a hope for lasting happiness, one's present contentment remains incomplete. One must resign oneself to accept whatever fate brings; yet, according to Leibniz, such "patience without hope cannot last and scarcely consoles" (G IV 298/AG 241).⁸

Leibniz's attack on "the sect of the new Stoics" raises the question of whether he thought the same criticisms could be applied to the ancient Stoics. From the decade following his critique of Descartes and Spinoza, there is evidence of Leibniz's independent knowledge of Stoic philosophy derived from the writings of Justus Lipsius. On this basis, he realized that it was a mistake to attribute fatalism, or a strict necessitarianism, to the Stoics, in contrast to the position of Spinoza.⁹ Still, I have suggested that Leibniz's fundamental concern was not merely to defend divine providence (a thesis embraced by the Stoics), but to defend what he understood as divine justice, the higher form of government that links God and rational creatures. On this count, as we shall see, he levels against the Stoics the same charge he makes against Descartes and Spinoza: that they impoverish the happiness of the virtuous person by restricting her to a "forced patience" in which no room is left for hope. Before examining this charge, however, it is important to have a balanced understanding of Leibniz's relation to the Stoics, for whatever criticisms he makes of their views, he also shares considerable philosophical ground with them.

II. Leibniz and Ancient Stoicism

Leibniz takes pains to emphasize the extent to which his philosophy preserves and unites the insights of his predecessors, particularly the ancients.¹⁰ In his 1698 reply to the objections of Pierre Bayle, he includes among these insights the Stoic doctrine of “connection” (*la connexion Stoïcienne*) (G IV 523/L 496). The term refers to an essential component of the Stoic conception of fate, which Leibniz glosses in the *Theodicy* as “the inevitable and eternal connection of all events” (sec. 332; G VI 312/H 325). Leibniz draws his knowledge of this part of Stoic philosophy again from Lipsius, who in turn reproduces Gellius’ rendering of Chrysippus’ account of fate in the lost book *On providence*: “Fate is a certain natural everlasting ordering of the whole: one set of things follows on and succeeds another, and the interconnection is inviolable.”¹¹

When Leibniz declares in the *Theodicy* that “all things are connected in each one of the possible worlds: the universe, whatever it may be, is all of one piece, like an ocean” (sec. 9; G VI 107/H 128), he means, as the Stoics do, that an eternal order links the happenings of the world, with prior events determining subsequent ones, in accordance with inviolable laws.¹² Like the Stoics, Leibniz’s acceptance of this principle rests on theological grounds. The connection of all things can be traced to the fact that they are related in this way by divine reason.¹³ Of course, Leibniz differs sharply from the Stoics in his characterization of this divinity. For the Stoics, god – “the manufacturer of the world-order” – is an immanent active principle that gives form and motion to matter by being present everywhere in it.¹⁴ Leibniz, by contrast, argues strongly on behalf of a conception of God as a transcendent being: an intelligent, purposive agent who conceives of an infinity of possible worlds, and chooses to create that one in which the order and harmony of things is maximized. Despite this difference, however, Leibniz exploits the doctrine of connection in ways reminiscent of the Stoics. In his 1695 *Specimen dynamicum*, he writes approvingly of his age’s having “saved from contempt . . . the tranquility of the Stoics which results from the best possible connection of things” (GM VI 234/L 436).¹⁵ Leibniz’s vision of the cosmos as a rationally ordered whole, in which human beings attain happiness by acting in accordance with their understanding of universal natural law, is one he shares with the Stoics.¹⁶ One achieves the highest level of virtue (what Leibniz calls “piety”) when one’s will is governed by the same rational principle by which God governs the universe. As with the Stoics, an essential step in achieving virtue for Leibniz is coming to understand the order by which all things are connected:

[B]ecause everything in nature has its cause and is ordered in every respect, it is impossible not to consider understanding and conduct based on understanding (that is, virtue) better than the contrary. Since nature brings everything in order, he who stands closest to that order already can most easily arrive at an orderly contemplation or orderly conception . . . (G VII 121/W 574).¹⁷

In Leibniz's writings, then, as in those of other early modern philosophers, we hear echoes of important Stoic ideas. In no useful sense of the word, however, would it be appropriate to call Leibniz a Stoic. In contrast to Justus Lipsius, he has no desire to revive the Stoic philosophy, and he endeavors to distance himself at critical points from the Stoics. Even with respect to those parts of the Stoic philosophy he finds congenial, Leibniz is quick to insert a caveat. While the Stoics, like other ancient schools, caught certain glimpses of the truth, their views must be re-expressed within a new philosophical framework to be found acceptable. As he writes of the Aristotelian doctrine of forms (another reclamation project), "We believe that this philosophy, accepted for so many centuries, must not be discarded but must be explained in a way that makes it consistent with itself (where this is possible) and clarifies and amplifies it with new truths" (GM VI 235/L 436). Leibniz's attitude toward the Stoics bears out this general lesson of his philosophical method: it is better to emend received opinions than to overthrow them (G II 295).¹⁸ He begins from the premise that there is a single truth to which all philosophers have had access and have struggled to express. In light of this, the correct method of philosophizing is to preserve what can be preserved, consistent with the discoveries of others, while at the same time recognizing that in doing so we may transform doctrines in ways that make them less than faithful reproductions of their originals. Accordingly, Leibniz acknowledges the Stoics as defending ideas that find a place within his system, albeit in a form that may be at odds with other Stoic doctrines.

III. The Importance of Hope

Leibniz's attempts to state where he parts company with the Stoics follow a common pattern, reminiscent of his criticisms of Descartes and Spinoza. The principal shortcoming of the Stoic philosophy is that, while it allows one to achieve a certain tranquility, or peace of mind, this tranquility falls short of true happiness. The reason for this is that the Stoic, in his attitude toward the universe and what providence may bring, is limited to a "forced patience": "Stoic fate would have one be tranquil because one is forced to be patient, since one cannot resist the course of things" (G VII 391/L 697). Opposed to this *fatum Stoicum*, Leibniz argues in his fifth letter to Samuel Clarke, is the *fatum Christianum*. For the Christian, he concedes, there is equally "a certain destiny of all things, regulated by the foreknowledge and providence of God." Nevertheless,

those who submit to [this destiny] through a knowledge of the divine perfections, of which the love of God is a consequence . . . have not only patience, like the pagan philosophers, but also are content with what God ordains, knowing that he does everything for the best, and not only for the greatest good in general but also for the greatest particular good of those who love him (G VII 391/L 697–8).¹⁹

With respect to events that have already occurred, Leibniz agrees with the Stoics that there is no greater foolishness than to rail against God's will. Where he faults the Stoics is with respect to the future. Here, he argues, contentment requires that we be able to anticipate future happiness, which is to say that we have a reasonable expectation that our hopes will be fulfilled. This is what the love of God offers us, according to Leibniz, and this is what the Stoics cannot deliver:

One can even say that the love of God gives us, in the present, a foretaste of future felicity . . . For it gives us perfect confidence in the goodness of our author and master, which produces real tranquility of mind, not as with the Stoics, who are induced to be patient by force, but one that is produced by present contentment, which also assures us future happiness . . . For the love of God also fulfills our hopes, and leads us down the road of supreme happiness (G VI 606/AG 212–3).

While these remarks leave the grounds of Leibniz's disagreement with the Stoics far from clear, we can begin to identify where their differences lie. A central one concerns the status of the passion of hope. As in his critique of Descartes and Spinoza, Leibniz insists that contentment requires that our hopes for future happiness be kept alive, to be nourished by the love of God and the confidence this brings that our hopes will be fulfilled. The Stoics present a very different view of hope. For them, hope is a *pathos*, a disturbance of the mind, that stands in the way of achieving happiness. It is a species of irrational desire or longing, based on a false judgment about the goodness of an anticipated end or outcome.²⁰ The Stoics' dismissal of hope is premised on their view that nothing is a good in itself except virtue and what partakes of it.²¹ Consequently, virtue by itself is sufficient for happiness. The things for which we hope – health, wealth, success – are “indifferents,” which may be preferred but are not valued for their own sakes as components of happiness.²² To achieve happiness, the Stoics argue, we should eliminate passions such as hope and fear, for they are directed at objects that are not goods in themselves and that leave us at the mercy of fortune. The anxiety that attends our vulnerability to fortune is central to the Stoics' rejection of hope. If we allow our happiness to depend on outcomes that are outside our control, we shall never possess tranquility. “Fear follows hope,” Seneca writes. “Both belong to a mind that is hanging in suspense, a mind made anxious by expectation of the future” (*Ep.* 5.8). Freed from the debilitating affects of hope and fear, the sage overcomes fortune through his virtue, which “alone keeps the soul from being bowed down, and allows it to stand its ground against fortune” (*Ep.* 71.30).

Leibniz's rejection of this Stoic position echoes traditional Christian objections to the Stoics' treatment of the passions. In *The City of God*, Augustine argues at length against the Stoics' dismissal of the passions, claiming that emotions such as hope, fear, pity, and distress are essential to the earthly life

of the Christian.²³ This is especially true of hope, which plays a critical role in guiding the soul toward supreme happiness:

If virtues are genuine – and genuine virtues can exist only in those who are endowed with true piety – they do not claim to be able to protect their possessors from every misery (for true virtues are not fraudulent in their claims); but they do claim that human life, now compelled by all the great evils of this age to be wretched, may be happy in the hope of a future life, just as it also has salvation in it. For how can a life be happy which as yet has no salvation? . . . Thus, just as we are saved by hope, so we are made happy by hope; and just as we have no grasp now of present salvation but await it in the future, so we look forward to future happiness, and this we do patiently. For we are among evils which we must patiently endure until we arrive at those goods where there will be everything in which we infallibly delight and nothing which we now must tolerate. Such is the salvation which in the life to come will itself also be supreme happiness [*finalis beatitudo*].²⁴

The Christian, according to Augustine, makes no claim for true happiness in this life. Rather, her hope, sustained by faith, directs her toward salvation in the next. Hope is essential for the Christian because it allows her to remain focused on the supreme good of union with God, and this hope, combined with patience, provides for whatever contentment is possible in this life. This position is reiterated by Aquinas,²⁵ and remains the standard Christian view in the seventeenth century, as expressed, for example, in Senault's *On the Usage of the Passions* (1641):

The Christian religion is entirely founded on hope, and as it scorns present happiness, one should not be surprised if it yearns after a future happiness. It confesses that it is not of this world, and it does not find strange that it is persecuted in an enemy land. It knows well that it is called from this miserable age to a happier age, and that possessing nothing on earth, it must hope for everything in heaven. It is to this that it addresses its prayers, it is from this that it waits to receive the effects of the promises of Jesus Christ and to taste that glory of which it here still has only pledges . . . Whatever accident may befall Christians, they are always secure and, knowing well that Jesus Christ is the foundation of their hope, they regard all earthly events with a tranquil mind.²⁶

There are obvious parallels between the position defended by Augustine and his followers and Leibniz's doctrine of the *fatum Christianum*. Both accounts posit a twofold relationship between hope and happiness: they stress the requirement of hope for future happiness, and maintain that this hope is instrumental in securing our present contentment. The orthodox Christian position, however, insists on several further commitments. According to Augustine, there is an incomparable difference in value between the happiness for which we hope and the happiness that follows on that hope. Earthly happiness is as nothing compared with the blessedness we may enjoy in a life after death. Fundamental to the Christian position as well is that this blessedness cannot be achieved through moral virtue alone, or the perfection of

the natural powers of a human being. Salvation is attained only through divine grace.²⁷ Finally, because grace by definition is not within our power and cannot be earned through virtuous action, the Christian's hope for supreme happiness is not a *rational* hope. Hope is essentially tied to faith in Jesus Christ as humanity's redeemer. In relation to the supernatural end of blessedness, hope without faith is empty.

In writings on theology, Leibniz acknowledges blessedness as humanity's supernatural end, and concedes that its attainment depends upon the reception of divine grace.²⁸ However, these are not the terms in which he frames his criticism of the Stoics. Central to the doctrine of the *fatum Christianum* is the assertion that our hopes for future happiness receive a secure foundation through the knowledge and love of God: "For the love of God also fulfills our hopes, and leads us down the road of supreme happiness" (G VI 606/AG 213). At three points, however, Leibniz's position diverges from Augustine's. First, Leibniz rejects the assumption that present contentment presupposes the hope for a final state of complete or perfect happiness. In the passage just quoted, he refers to the road *of* supreme happiness ("*le chemin du suprême bonheur*") rather than the road *to* supreme happiness, for in his view happiness is not an endpoint, a state in which nothing is left to be desired, but a dynamic state that must be sustained. As he defines it, "happiness is a lasting pleasure, which cannot occur without a continual progress to new pleasures" (RB 194). The legitimate object of our hope, therefore, is to persist in a state of pleasure that is perpetuated through the satisfaction of desire. As Leibniz writes in the *Principles of Nature and Grace*, "our happiness will never consist, and must not consist, in a complete joy, in which nothing is left to desire . . . but must consist in a perpetual progress to new pleasures and new perfections" (G VI 606/AG 213).²⁹ Second, despite the conventional appeal to the "knowledge and love of God," the case Leibniz makes against the Stoics rests on rational grounds. The hope for future happiness that is integral to the *fatum Christianum* is a hope supported by truths of natural theology: the doctrine of divine justice and the immortality of the soul. According to Leibniz, rational beings form under God "a moral world within the natural world," a "kingdom of grace" operating in harmony with the "kingdom of nature" (G VI 622/AG 224). Consequently, we have reason to believe that the world was created such that it naturally serves the ends of divine justice:

Under this perfect government, there will be no good action that is unrewarded, no bad action that goes unpunished, and everything must result in the well-being of the good, that is, of those who are not dissatisfied in this great state, those who trust in providence, after having done their duty, and who love and imitate the author of all good, as they should, finding pleasure in the consideration of his perfections.³⁰

Finally, Leibniz rejects any sharp contrast between the happiness that can be achieved in this life and what might await us in another. For divine justice

to achieve its intended goal – the balance of virtue and happiness – it is necessary that there be another existence beyond our present life. However, happiness is not reserved for this future life, nor are we limited to waiting for it “with patience.” As a consequence of God’s justice, the happiness of rational beings unfailingly tracks their progress in virtue, and happiness is achievable within the natural existence of a rational being provided it is guided by the proper understanding of divine justice. In principle, Leibniz’s position requires no deeper commitment to the tenets of Christianity than the conviction that God has created the best of all possible worlds, whose goodness in part consists in the law that rational beings flourish insofar as they pursue a life of virtue.³¹

IV. Two Conceptions of Happiness

Against the “new Stoics,” Descartes and Spinoza, Leibniz argued that, by failing to defend the principle of divine justice, they fail to guarantee the conditions for hope. And by undermining the hope for future happiness, they destroy the possibility of present contentment. If we have no grounds to hope for a happiness commensurate with our virtue, we can only resign ourselves to fate – what Leibniz calls “forced patience.” He advances a similar argument against the ancient Stoics. They too restrict the virtuous person to a patience that falls short of contentment, because they fail to support a conception of divine justice that guarantees a balance between virtue and happiness, and because they reject the passion of hope. As Leibniz typically presents the argument, it appears that the first claim is the critical one. He maintains that present contentment presupposes a hope for future happiness, and that the hope for future happiness presupposes a belief in divine justice and the immortality of the soul. However, Stoics and new Stoics alike are committed to principles that contradict the latter two beliefs; therefore, their philosophy undermines the hope for future happiness.³²

On this way of understanding their disagreement, Leibniz and the Stoics are primarily divided by theological issues: they have different views about the nature of God and the soul. Yet this fails to convey the full extent of their conflict. Equally important is a fundamental difference in their respective conceptions of happiness. Whereas for the Stoics happiness is no more than the constant exercise of virtue, an activity that is attended by, but does not essentially involve, positive affects such as pleasure or joy, for Leibniz happiness is defined as “a lasting pleasure” (RB 194). Leibniz’s ethical theory is structured in a way that blurs distinctions central to ancient eudaimonism. Although he is committed to a broadly hedonistic conception of happiness, he rejects the Epicurean doctrine that pleasure is the primary good and the criterion for judging every good thing.³³ The primary category of intrinsic value for Leibniz is “perfection” (or “metaphysical goodness”). This is a goodness possessed by all things insofar as they are endowed with certain

basic attributes (power, knowledge, will), and is possessed in the highest degree by God, the *ens perfectissimum*. Pleasure, according to Leibniz, is “the perception of perfection” (G VII 291). Consequently, although pleasure is a good, its goodness is derivative from the prior goodness of perfection. Leibniz does not hold that the value of pleasure consists solely in the value of the perfection perceived; the perception itself is a source of value over and above the perfection of its object. Nevertheless, he believes that one pleasure is preferable to another only to the extent that it is the perception of greater perfection.

Happiness is “a lasting pleasure,” or as Leibniz refines the definition, “a state of enduring joy”:

In morals I establish our *happiness* as an end; this I define as a state of enduring joy [*laetitia*]. Joy I define as an extraordinary predominance of pleasure, for in the midst of joy we can sense certain sorrows, but sorrows that are hardly to be considered in comparison with the pleasures . . . But it is necessary that the joy be enduring, lest it should happen to be overcome by a subsequent greater sadness. Moreover, *pleasure* is the sensation of perfection (GLW 171–2/AG 233).

In describing happiness as our end, Leibniz acknowledges that the best state for a human being to be in is one in which joy endures without interruption. Only in a limited sense, though, does his account satisfy the conditions in terms of which happiness is identified as the end, or *telos*, by the eudaimonist tradition. Happiness is a good sought for its own sake, but it is not sought for its sake alone, or in preference to every other good; rather, happiness is sought because of its being the perpetuation of pleasure, which is desirable because it is the perception of perfection. Similarly, while happiness is the best state for a human being to be in, it is not a state in which one achieves a final perfection of one’s nature, or lacks nothing that would contribute to that perfection. On the contrary, the condition of happiness is one in which, optimally, one is always in the process of *perfecting* one’s nature. Thus, in contrast to the Stoics and other ancient schools, Leibniz does not identify happiness with the *summum bonum*. That title is reserved for the *ens perfectissimum*.

These are points to which I shall return. For the moment, my concern is with the role this conception of happiness plays in Leibniz’s account of divine justice. Leibniz begins from the position that virtue is the ordering of the will by reason (a reason we share with God), and that virtue is its own reward, inasmuch as its possession is intrinsically pleasurable. As he writes to Queen Sophie Charlotte, “our reason makes us resemble God in a small way, as much through our knowledge of order as through the order we ourselves can give to things within our grasp, in imitation of the order God gives to the universe. It is also in this that our virtue and perfection consist, just as our happiness consists in the pleasure we take in it” (G IV 508/AG 192). Passages such as this might make it seem that virtue by itself is sufficient for

happiness. Yet this is not Leibniz's position. He certainly believes that a life of virtue forms the most reliable path to happiness; however, unlike the Stoics, he accepts that events outside our control can disrupt that happiness. The virtuous person remains vulnerable to fortune, because other things besides virtue also may be goods for her. Given the thesis that all things possess intrinsic goodness or perfection, the perception of which is pleasure, it follows that, even if virtue is the greatest perfection, other things also may be valued for the sake of their goodness; and when we are deprived of those things, we experience their absence as pain, and hence as a potential disruption of our happiness.

Because an imbalance between virtue and happiness is conceptually possible for Leibniz, justice as compensation has an essential role to play in his ethics. The virtuous person will be made happy by the exercise of her virtue, but this does not mean that other circumstances may not disrupt her happiness. God as providential creator may have reasons, connected with the harmony of the whole, for allowing the virtuous person to suffer undeserved evils and the wicked person to profit temporarily from his wickedness. In contrast to the Stoics, Leibniz allows that these are real evils; however, he insists that divine justice will, in the course of time, correct such imbalances through the mechanism of nature. God's providential care for rational beings thus takes the form of a harmony between the kingdoms of nature and grace, as a result of which, through the operation of nature, no crime is left unpunished, no virtue unrewarded.

Leibniz's criticism of the Stoics, then, hinges on a substantially different conception of the relation of virtue and happiness, and this in turn accounts for their contrasting evaluations of the passion of hope. Leibniz correctly characterizes Stoic tranquility as consisting of "patience without hope."³⁴ However, it is a mistake to think of this patience as a consequence of the Stoics' acceptance of a "blind necessity" in nature. As much as Leibniz, the Stoics conceive of nature as governed by a providence that aims to promote the happiness of rational beings. Their disagreement concerns the nature of that happiness – specifically, whether virtuous action is exhaustive of happiness, or whether happiness is properly understood as an affective state to which virtuous action contributes, but in regard to which its contribution may be overwhelmed by concomitant suffering. Adopting the former position, the Stoics dismiss hope as a misguided passion.³⁵ Our happiness is complete when we act virtuously, choosing in accordance with nature's universal law. Since our knowledge of nature is limited, we must accept the notion that our morally correct choices may sometimes fail to achieve the most pleasing results. For the Stoic, such outcomes are to be borne with patience, understanding that everything in nature happens in accordance with God's will, and that, whatever happens, our happiness depends solely on our virtue. It is this last conclusion that Leibniz resists. He, too, urges us to be content with God's providence, understanding that everything

happens for the best, but he is prepared to admit that physical evils – pain and suffering – can reverse the virtuous person’s happiness. In this case, our consolation lies in the thought that our fate is governed by divine justice, which guarantees that, in the long run, virtue is balanced with happiness and vice with unhappiness. Thus, hope for future happiness is integral to the attitude of the virtuous person.

V. The Sufficiency of Virtue for Happiness

This is Leibniz’s official story of why we cannot live without hope. A fuller examination of his ethical theory, however, reveals a more complicated picture. Leibniz recognizes that anxiety concerning future happiness is largely a product of desires we have for things outside our power: bodily health and external goods. Standard cases of undeserved suffering are ones in which a virtuous, or morally innocent, person suffers a loss of external goods that destroys her happiness. The Stoics’ response to this sort of case is to argue that nothing of value has been lost: the only true good, virtue, is always within one’s power; hence, happiness is secure against the vagaries of fortune. A striking feature of Leibniz’s deeper ethical position is that he agrees with at least the spirit of this Stoic teaching. Anxiety concerning the future and the potential loss of one’s happiness will trouble only those individuals who attach excessive value to goods other than virtue and understanding. The hallmark of the person of highest virtue is that “true goods” of the soul are sought for their own sake in preference to all lesser goods.³⁶ Accordingly, the happiness of such individuals depends as much as possible on what is within their power (their own perfection). Although such individuals remain susceptible to suffering, the strength of their virtue is such that their happiness remains intact despite the hardships of fortune. Recognizing that the only “true goods” are those that depend on the powers of will and intellect, they are capable of a joy that overcomes the greatest “pains and misfortunes.”³⁷

This line of argument is clearly in some tension with that ascribed to Leibniz in Section IV. There it was claimed that virtue may be insufficient for happiness, because other things besides virtue also are goods for us, and the deprivation of these may be felt with enough intensity that it overwhelms the pleasure that is virtue’s natural product. Thus, one might be virtuous, and act virtuously, and still not be happy, if fortune deprives one of other important goods. Hence the need for divine justice. We have now encountered the claim, however, that this type of conflict does not threaten a person of the highest virtue. For such a person, virtue may be sufficient for happiness (in nominal agreement with the Stoics), even if struck by serious illness or the loss of valued possessions.

The reconciliation of these claims requires that we look more closely at the foundations of Leibniz’s position. The following three principles are

plausibly extrapolated from his writings:

1. For a virtuous person, virtue is valued for its own sake (as an intrinsic good or perfection) and for the pleasure derived from its perception, and not for its utility or the advantages derived from its exercise.³⁸
2. The pleasure derived from the perception of virtue is proportional to the degree of one's virtue.
3. One possesses greater virtue to the extent that one naturally and reliably prefers greater goods to lesser goods *and* perceives the former with a proportionately greater pleasure.

In the properly virtuous person, the choice to act virtuously is motivated neither by fear of punishment nor by hope of reward; virtuous actions are performed for their own sake and for the sake of the pleasure inherent in them. This does not entail, however, that one values virtue alone, or values it more highly than any other good. Given Leibniz's theory of value, one *should* perceive virtue as the greatest human good; however, it is consistent with his usage that one can be a virtuous person and still fail to meet this condition. Thus, virtue comes in degrees, and one more nearly approaches the condition of perfect virtue to the extent that one's judgments and perceptions of value more nearly match the truth about the relative value of different goods.

With these principles in hand, Leibniz is able to draw the following distinction. An individual may value virtue for its own sake and for the sake of the pleasure derived from it, and yet may not consistently value it more highly than lesser goods. When confronted with certain choices, such a person may sacrifice her virtue for the sake of reputation, riches, or bodily pleasure. Alternatively, she may always act as commanded by virtue, yet may feel her virtue to be worth little when struck by illness or other hardships, the pain of the latter overwhelming the pleasure derived from her virtue. For such an individual, the hope for future happiness, supported by a belief in divine justice, offsets the effects of fortune, and contributes to preserving a state of contentment. In the case of the person of highest virtue, by contrast, her virtue is such that she always recognizes intellectually that virtue is of greater value than any other good and feels it as a greater source of pleasure. Hence, in the face of even the most devastating hardships, the pleasure derived from her virtue exceeds the pain experienced as a result of illness, injury or loss. Such an individual will have little grounds for anxiety about her future happiness. Understanding happiness to depend on what is within her power, she surmises that she will be happy in the future for the same reason she is happy now, and that no setback in fortune can destroy her happiness.

This leaves Leibniz with a position that, if not a Stoic one, is closer to Stoicism than initially appeared. On his account, the person of highest

virtue does not have to wait with anticipation to receive from God the fitting reward for her virtue. Rather, her happiness is simply the continued progress of pleasure produced by the exercise of her natural powers of will and understanding. Since the source of her happiness is limited to what is within her power, she can be confident of that happiness independently of expectations of future compensation. It is just this confidence about her ability to ensure her own happiness that Leibniz links to an attitude of hope – a more profound hope than is possessed by the person of lesser virtue. Whereas the latter can only hope that her virtue ultimately will earn her lasting happiness, the person of highest virtue has the reasonable expectation that she will continue to enjoy the happiness she now enjoys, because she has the means of ensuring the continued progress of her pleasure.

VI. Hope and Happiness

Closer consideration of Leibniz's analysis of hope lends support to this conclusion. In the *New Essays* there appears the following exchange between Philonous and Leibniz's spokesman Theophilus:

PHIL. Hope is the contentment of the soul which thinks 'of a probable future enjoyment of a thing, which is apt to delight' it. Fear is a disquiet of the soul, 'upon the thought of future evil' which may occur.

THEO. If disquiet signifies a displeasure, I grant that it always accompanies fear; but taking it for that undetectable spur which urges us on, it is also relevant to hope. The Stoics took the passions to be beliefs: thus for them hope was the belief in a future good, and fear the belief in a future evil. But I would rather say that the passions are not contentments or displeasures or beliefs, but endeavours – or rather modifications of endeavour – which arise from beliefs or opinions and are accompanied by pleasure or displeasure (RB 167).

Philonous paraphrases Locke, who in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* says exactly what one thinks Leibniz might say in support of the claim that hope contributes in an essential way to our happiness. According to Locke, hope is a "pleasure of the Mind" which we experience when we think of the "probable future enjoyment of a thing that is apt to delight" (II.xx.9). Thus, hope contributes directly to happiness as a pleasure we feel when we contemplate an anticipated future good. Leibniz rejects this account. He dismisses both the Stoics' explanation of hope as a false belief about an anticipated good and Locke's characterization of hope as a kind of pleasure. In their place, Leibniz claims that hope is an endeavor, or a modification of endeavor, which arises from belief or opinion and is accompanied by pleasure or pain.³⁹

"Endeavor" translates the French word "*tendance*," which Leibniz equates with the Latin "*conatus*" (RB 172). These terms point to a key concept in

both his dynamics and his theory of the soul. In the *New Essays*, Leibniz describes the soul as “an entelechy – i.e. a primary or substantial endeavour . . . accompanied by perception” (RB 169–70). In more technical writings, he refers to this same principle as “primitive active force.” Distinctive about this entelechy, or primitive force, is that it is not simply the capacity or potential to act but a force from which change spontaneously follows. Active force, Leibniz writes, “involves an endeavor [*conatus*] or inclination [*tendētia*] toward actions, so that, unless something else impedes it, action results” (G IV 395/AG 252). The modifications of this force, or endeavor, are thus directed tendencies – moments of effort or striving – toward future states.

Leibniz draws from these ideas the conclusion that the soul is never in an entirely tranquil state, but instead is always in a condition of “disquiet,” modified by innumerable imperceptible inclinations or “appetitions” toward what its perceptions represent as goods that it lacks. At this most basic level, life is appetite, or the effort toward what is represented as a preferred state. “These minute impulses,” he writes,

consist in our continually overcoming small obstacles – our nature labours at this without our thinking about it. This is the true character of that disquiet which we sense without taking cognizance of it; it makes us act not only when we are impassioned but also when we appear most calm – for we are never without some activity and motion, simply because nature continually labours to be more completely at ease (RB 188).

Leibniz emphasizes that these primitive impulses are not ones of which we are aware. We are not always consciously suffering on account of goods we perceive ourselves to lack. Nevertheless, the soul's appetitions are intimately connected with pain and pleasure, understood respectively as representations of the lack of some good or its presence.⁴⁰

For Leibniz, hope is a manifestation of this basic disquiet, the soul's ceaseless striving to achieve a preferred state of being. “Disquiet occurs not merely in uncomfortable passions such as ‘aversion, fear, anger, envy, shame’, but also in their opposites, love, hope, calmness, generosity, and pride. It can be said that wherever there is desire there will be disquiet” (RB 192). As an endeavor toward an anticipated good, hope by itself does not necessarily produce pleasure, for many of our hopes remain unfulfilled. Nevertheless, whether or not they are fulfilled, as long as we exist, we continue to hope. As an expression of the soul's natural endeavor, the expectation of future fulfillment is an unavoidable fact about our nature: we strive for goods we perceive ourselves to lack, and do so with greater force in proportion to the magnitude of the good and the expectation of success.⁴¹

When Leibniz criticizes the Stoics' dismissal of hope, however, he has more in mind than just that hope is an unavoidable fact about our nature. There he argues not simply that hope is something we cannot help having, but also that hope is implicated in our understanding of happiness as an

ethical end. In the person who enjoys the best sort of life, hope forms the basis of a general attitude concerning life's possibilities: one regards the future as holding a definite promise for one's lasting happiness. According to the argument of Section IV, a place for hope must be preserved because even the virtuous person cannot achieve contentment as long as she remains anxious about the future. Her anxiety is quelled when she is offered a reason to hope that in the end she will enjoy happiness, an assurance that is provided by the knowledge of divine justice and the immortality of the soul. Hope in this sense contributes directly to an individual's happiness by removing a significant source of disquiet. If one has a well-founded expectation of future happiness, present hardships are more easily borne, and one is relieved of worry about the permanence of goods one currently enjoys. When hardship strikes, one suffers, but with a secure hope for future happiness, one is freed of the fear that such suffering might continue indefinitely.

This account broadly reflects the strategy of the Christian doctrine of salvation, in which the hope for supreme happiness assuages the misery that is the natural lot of an earthly existence. It also closely resembles Locke's account of hope as a "pleasure of the mind," which follows on the thought of a "probable future enjoyment of a thing that is apt to delight." Basic to the Christian view is the emphasis it places on the preservation of present contentment through hope for a deferred state of ultimate happiness. In his challenge to the Stoics, Leibniz offers his own version of the deferred happiness doctrine, one premised on the operation of divine justice. His analysis of the concept of hope, however, suggests again that this is not his deepest response to the question of why hope is essential to happiness. As we have seen, Leibniz rebukes the Stoics for limiting the virtuous person to a "forced patience," which he deems sufficient for tranquility but not for true happiness. The Christian, as represented by Augustine, is open to a similar charge. If she simply waits "with patience" for God's final deliverance, then her life is characterized by a kind of passivity in relation to her own happiness. For Leibniz, this is not the attitude of the virtuous person. The virtuous agent is one who contributes actively to her own happiness through the exercise of her natural powers of will and understanding, and it is in this capacity that hope is of greatest consequence. Not only is hope itself conceived as an example of the soul's inherent endeavor to achieve a preferred state of being, but in the person of highest virtue, this hope takes the form of a well-founded expectation that her efforts in this regard will be successful. Thus, hope does not simply console the virtuous agent with the thought of a deferred future happiness; it anticipates happiness as being within her power and motivates her to act in ways that are effective in achieving it.

Leibniz associates this confidence with the possession of "wisdom," which he defines as "the science of happiness [*la science de la félicité*], or of the means of attaining lasting contentment" (G II 136/M 171). The possession of wisdom implies, minimally, a recognition that true happiness can be achieved

only through the exercise of reason. This involves the familiar point that reason plays a crucial instrumental role in securing the progress of pleasure: "Unless appetite is directed by reason it endeavors after present pleasure rather than that lasting pleasure which is called happiness" (RB 200). Leibniz goes beyond this, though, to claim that reason itself is the source of distinct (as opposed to confused) perceptions of perfection, and hence a preferred source of pleasure. "Pleasures of this kind," he argues, "which occur in the knowledge and production of order and harmony, are the most valuable" (RB 194). In the first place, these pleasures are more reliable; they are free of the inherent limitations of bodily pleasures, their transience and tendency to deceive. More importantly, pleasures of reason are subject to a natural growth or development, reflective of the development of the understanding. The more we learn about the order and harmony of nature, the more we are able to learn. The more we guide our will by reason in the production of order, the more apt we are to do so in the future. In both cases, reliance on reason leads not only to pleasure that can be sustained but to pleasure that grows, since its object is the increasing perfection of the understanding and will. In contrast to bodily pleasures, where progress means nothing more than a succession of pleasures that do not persist, in the case of rational pleasures, progress means a growth of pleasure that can be sustained over time, and hence true happiness:

The pleasure which the soul finds in itself through understanding is a present joy such as can conserve our joy for the future as well. It follows from this that nothing serves our happiness better than the illumination of our understanding and the exercise of our will to act always according to our understanding, and that this illumination is to be sought especially in the knowledge of such things as can bring our understanding ever further into higher light. For there springs from such knowledge an enduring progress in wisdom and virtue, and therefore also in perfection and joy (G VII 88/L 426).

Leibniz maintains that the knowledge and love of God is essential for sustaining this "enduring progress in wisdom and virtue." Of principal importance is knowledge of the divine perfections: "One cannot love God without knowing his perfections, and this knowledge contains the principles of true piety" (G VI 28/H 52).⁴² Significantly, this knowledge implies no immediate acquaintance with, or intellectual intuition of, God. Instead, it consists entirely of general intellectual truths: "there are two means of seeing [God's] beauty, namely in the knowledge of eternal truths, . . . and in the harmony of the universe . . . That is to say, one must know the marvels of reason and the marvels of nature" (Gr 580–1/R 84). When Leibniz speaks of knowledge of the divine perfections, he appeals both to a kind of knowledge he believes we share with God and to an epistemic ideal – the totality of all such knowledge – against which we are able to measure the progress of our understanding. Included in this category is knowledge of

the eternal truths of mathematics, knowledge of the order and harmony of the natural world, and knowledge of the fundamental practical principle of his philosophy – that of universal justice, or “the charity of the wise” – the foundation of natural theology (as it relates to God) and ethics (as it relates to human beings).

The crux of Leibniz’s doctrine of wisdom is that by guiding ourselves according to knowledge of the divine perfections, we can enjoy an unending progress in perfection. We continue to strive for greater understanding of the order of the world, crediting that order to a providential creator, and we endeavor to imitate in our own actions what we understand to be the governing principle of God’s will. In this way, we “live in agreement,” deriving our happiness from a source that is at once within our power and in accord with the reason by which God governs the world.⁴³

VII. Moral Progress and the Hope for Happiness

For Leibniz, the fundamental problem of ethics – how to secure a happy life – reduces to the problem of how to ensure the perpetuation of joy, the state in which pleasure predominates over pain. As an ideal, happiness takes the form of a joy that would endure without interruption: no reversal of fortune, no loss or hardship, would be capable of destroying it. Leibniz envisions a type of perfected virtue that would be sufficient to guarantee such happiness. For the person who possessed it, the pleasure derived from this virtue would be such that no suffering could overwhelm it.

Conceived in these terms, Leibniz’s position comes close to that of the Stoics. Consider the following description by Seneca of the good proper to a human being:

It is a perfect and faultless mind, the rival of that of god, which raises itself above human concerns and counts as its own nothing outside itself. You are a rational animal. What then is the good within you? Perfected reason. Are you prepared to develop this to its limit, to its greatest possible degree? Then judge yourself happy when all your joys are born of reason, and when – marking the things men clutch at, pray for, watch over – you find nothing which you desire . . . (*Ep.* 124.23–24).

For Seneca, one is happy when all one’s “joys are born of reason,” and nothing but perfected reason (or virtue) is judged a good. Again, his position is distinguished from Leibniz’s by the fact that for the Stoics, virtue is constitutive of happiness, whereas Leibniz identifies happiness with the enduring joy derived from the perception of virtue. Yet both judge a life ideally happy when reason is perfected to the point where nothing is found to have greater value than perfected reason itself.

Leibniz stresses that the person of highest virtue has a well-founded hope for lasting happiness. Even if one is certain of happiness, one looks to the future for the perpetuation of one’s joy. The Stoics do not make this claim,

because for them the virtuous person as such *is* happy. Not being a good for which one looks to the future, happiness is not something for which the virtuous person needs to hope. Still, the Stoics acknowledge both joy (*chara, gaudium*) and rational desire (*boulêsis, voluntas*) as good emotional states (*eupatheiai*) by which the sage is affected, and together these might be seen as supporting a hope much like the one Leibniz defends. To the extent that joy is a good, it is reasonable to desire it, and for the virtuous person there is reason to expect that such joy will endure. Thus, like Leibniz's person of highest virtue, the sage can look forward to a life of constant and enduring joy.⁴⁴

A more telling comparison of the two positions comes when we consider the person who is not yet a sage but who is eager for moral improvement. Like Leibniz, the Stoics recognize the possibility and value of moral progress, and they provide an account of how one becomes morally better by consistently performing appropriate acts (*kathêkonta*) and minimizing one's dependence upon fortune.⁴⁵ Traditionally, the Stoic position on moral progress has been attacked on the grounds that it rejects any intermediate state between virtue and vice. According to Plutarch, the Stoics believe that "even those who are getting close to virtue are no less in a state of vice than those who are far from it. And just as the blind are blind even if they are going to recover their sight a little later, so those progressing remain foolish and vicious right up to their attainment of virtue."⁴⁶ Plutarch draws from this the conclusion that the Stoics lack any coherent notion of moral progress.⁴⁷ However, this is unwarranted. The Stoics have an account of how one becomes morally better; what they lack is an explanation of how one can, with some reasonable expectation of success, attain *virtue*, and hence happiness. The Stoics say a variety of things about what distinguishes the soul of the sage from that of the fool – it is marked by a kind of knowledge that endows it with a "firmness" that renders error impossible; however, they offer no reliable procedure for how to achieve this goal.⁴⁸ For this reason, perhaps, the Stoics make no effort to defend hope as an attitude that a person who is progressing morally might reasonably have toward the achievement of happiness. While it may be reasonable to *wish* to be virtuous, it is not reasonable to desire it with the expectation of success, for one's best efforts at moral improvement cannot be counted on to produce happiness. One can improve to the point of performing all appropriate acts in a reliable manner, and still fall short of the goal. Thus, happiness is not something for which one can reasonably hope. More than this, the Stoics are committed to the view that, strictly speaking, it is not reasonable even to hope for moral progress. Moral progress as such is not a good but a preferred indifferent. Thus it is properly selected, but it is not something one desires for its own sake as a good that contributes in an essential way to happiness.

It is here that Leibniz's position is most effective as a foil against the Stoics. It is plausible to think that, for the person who is intent on moral

progress, the expectation of success – that one is progressing in a way that justifiably can be seen as bringing one closer to happiness – is of vital importance. What Leibniz has to say against the Stoics on this point is not without qualification. The Stoics deny that it is reasonable to hope to achieve happiness. A case can be made that Leibniz, too, would hesitate to claim that one can expect, on rational grounds, to achieve a state of virtue in which happiness is *guaranteed*. In different lives, happiness is subject to different stresses. For a well-fed scholar living in peaceful times with few personal attachments, happiness may be easy to maintain. Under different conditions, its preservation may be far more difficult. Yet Leibniz believes that no one is in a position to foresee the ways in which fortune may threaten their happiness. While one can hope that one's dedication to virtue will be sufficient to withstand whatever fortune may bring, it is impossible to know this with certainty. On his account, then, there is no rational basis for the hope that one can progress to a state of perfection in which happiness is guaranteed. The hope for ideal happiness – a joy that is guaranteed to persist without interruption – is supported only in the case of the person who is assumed already to possess the highest virtue.

Granting this, there is still much that Leibniz is able to say to the person intent on moral progress that the Stoics cannot. Leibniz differs most profoundly from the Stoics in rejecting the identity of moral perfection, happiness, and the highest good. By making virtue a matter of degree, and identifying happiness with the pleasure that follows from it, Leibniz can explain why someone whose virtue is informed by wisdom can reasonably judge herself to be making progress toward the goal of moral perfection, and why she is, from the point of view of happiness, better off as she approaches that goal. To be happy on his account, one's virtue does not have to be *perfect* – that is, strong enough to resist any possible assault on the pleasure derived from it; it only needs to be strong enough to do so under the circumstances in which one finds oneself. Furthermore, Leibniz offers an account of how one can reasonably expect to improve one's chances of being able to preserve one's happiness, to the extent that it is based on an "enduring progress of wisdom and virtue."⁴⁹

These are not arguments Leibniz himself presses against the Stoics, but they serve to highlight what is most innovative about his position, acknowledging its considerable debt to Stoicism. By rejecting the assumption that virtue is something that is either possessed in its entirety or not possessed at all, and by linking happiness to the pleasure that is virtue's natural product, Leibniz is able to offer a fuller explanation of the nature of moral progress and of the dependence of human happiness on the hope for such progress. Some of this picture can be found in the Stoics themselves, particularly in writings that stress the psychological benefits that flow from a life of virtue, free of the effects of fortune.⁵⁰ However, this does not approach Stoicism from the point of view of its most basic theoretical principles. Whether or

not a person is a sage, those principles give priority to the endurance of what fate delivers as against the effort to ameliorate one's condition – or, as Leibniz would have it, to a life of *patience sans espérance*.⁵¹

Notes

1. The principal texts are Lipsius, *De constantia* (1584), *Manuductio ad Stoicam philosophiam* (1604), *Physiologiae stoicorum libri tres* (1604); and Du Vair, *Philosophie morale des Stoïques* (1585). Selections from Lipsius's works appear in French translation in Jacqueline Lagrée (1994). An excerpt from Du Vair is translated in Schneewind (1990), vol. 1. English translations of other relevant Neostoic texts (including a brief excerpt from Lipsius's *Manuductio*) are found in Kraye (1997). On the reception of Stoic ethics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Anthony Levi (1964). [For further discussion of Lipsius, see Long's Chapter 1 in this volume; for discussion of Stoic ethics generally, see Long as well as Irwin (11) and Miller (6) (eds.)]
2. Schneewind (1998) cites the Stoics as a key influence on the strain of modern moral philosophy he labels "perfectionism." However, he adds, "After [Lipsius and Du Vair] the intellectualism of the Stoics was detached from their specific doctrines concerning the human good, given a new footing, and turned in new moral directions" (170). Schneewind includes Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz among the representatives of "perfectionism," but does not elaborate on their relation to Stoicism. [For the idea of "appropriation," see Osler and references there (n. 2) in this volume. (eds.)]
3. Recent examples include Susan James (1993); Derk Pereboom (1994); Alexandre Matheron (1999).
4. Schneewind (1996) offers a brief discussion of Leibniz's views; see 293–96. Several of the claims of the present essay are previewed in Rutherford (2001). What follows is in part an attempt to develop and refine points made in that paper.
5. A VI.4, 1384–88/AG 281–4. Watermark dating places the essay between 1678 and 1680. Leibniz's writings are cited according to the following abbreviations (where a quoted passage differs from a cited translation, or none is cited, the translation is my own): A = Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Preussische (later: Deutsche) Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (Darmstadt/Leipzig/Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–). AG = G.W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and tr. R. Ariew and D. Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989). D = *Gothofredi Guillelmi Leibnitii Opera Omnia*, ed. L. Dutens (Geneva: De Tournes, 1768; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1989). G = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin: Weidmann, 1875–90; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1978). GLW = *Briefwechsel zwischen Leibniz und Christian Wolff*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt (Halle: H.W. Schmidt, 1860; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1963). GM = G.W. Leibniz, *Mathematische Schriften*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin: A. Asher; Halle: H.W. Schmidt, 1849–63). Gr = G.W. Leibniz, *Textes inédits d'après les manuscrits de la bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre*, ed. G. Grua (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1948; repr. New York: Garland, 1985). H = G.W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, tr. E.M. Huggard (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985). L = G. W.

- Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. and tr. L. E. Loemker (Dordrecht: Reidel, 2nd ed. 1969). Mo = *Mittheilungen aus Leibnizens ungedruckten Schriften*, ed. G. Mollat (Leipzig: H. Haessel, 1893). R = G.W. Leibniz, *Political Writings*, ed. and tr. P. Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 1988). RB = G.W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, tr. P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). W = G.W. Leibniz, *Selections*, tr. P. Wiener (New York: Scribners, 1951).
6. This was Leibniz's immediate reaction on learning of Spinoza's views, and he repeated these criticisms until the end of his life. See, for example, *Theodicy*, sec. 173.
 7. Here, Leibniz paraphrases Descartes's own description of his position in a letter of 18 August 1645 to Princess Elisabeth. See CSMK III, 261–2.
 8. There is no room here to attempt a full evaluation of Leibniz's reading of Descartes and Spinoza. Spinoza's ethical theory includes many important Stoic elements, including the Stoics' dismissal of hope. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines hope as "an inconstant joy, born of the idea of a future or past thing whose outcome we to some extent doubt" (III Def. Aff. XII). Hope is antithetical to happiness, because it rests on uncertainty and therefore is always paired with its twin, fear: "He who is suspended in hope and doubts a thing's outcome is supposed to imagine something which excludes the existence of the future thing. And to this extent he is saddened, and consequently, while he is suspended in hope, he fears that the thing [he imagines] will happen" (III Def. Aff. XIII Exp.). In general, Spinoza believes, the passions of hope and fear "show a defect of knowledge and a lack of power in the mind." Accordingly, "the more we strive to live according to the guidance of reason, the more we strive to depend less on hope, to free ourselves from fear, to conquer fortune as much as we can, and to direct our actions by the certain counsels of reason" (IVP47S) (tr. Curley (1985)). Descartes has a more positive view of hope. See *Passions of the Soul*, arts. 58, 165–6, 173 (CSM I). His general assessment of the passions is that "they are all by nature good, and that we have nothing to avoid but their misuse or their excess" (art. 211). Thus, he concludes, "the chief use of wisdom lies in its teaching us to be masters of our passions and to control them with such skill that the evils which they cause are quite bearable, and even become a source of joy" (art. 212).
 9. "The Stoics are accused of this error [of fatalism], against which J. Lipsius defends them, since everything nonetheless happens as a result of divine decrees, or by the free will of God and created beings, though in a determinate order which God infallibly knows . . . This [fatalism] in fact seems to have been the view of Hobbes and Spinoza, the former of whom made all things corporeal, the latter of whom thought that God is nothing other than the very nature or substance of the world." *De Religione Magnorum Virorum*, ca. 1686–87 (A VI.4, 246o). Cf. Lagrée (1994), 58–9.
 10. It would be an exaggeration to say that Leibniz's philosophy is closer to that of the ancients than to that of Descartes or Spinoza. However, in general, he is inclined to highlight points of agreement in the case of the ancients and points of disagreement in the case of his fellow moderns, and more consistently than other modern philosophers he stresses the enduring importance of the contributions of the ancients.

11. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 7.2.3 (L-S 55K). For an analysis of this text, see Susanne Bobzien (1998), 47–50.
12. Leibniz explicitly embraces the idea of fate, or destiny, in an unpublished German essay: “That everything comes to pass through an established destiny [*Verhängnis*] is as certain as that three times three are nine. For destiny consists in the fact that everything is linked to everything else, like a chain, and that everything just as infallibly will happen before it happens, as that something unmistakably has happened when it happens” (G VII 117). The consequences of the doctrine of connection are far-reaching for Leibniz. For further discussion and texts, see Rutherford (1995), 36–9, 137, 145–8.
13. See, for example, *Theodicy*, secs. 84, 360.
14. D.L., 7.134 (L-S 44B), 137 (L-S 44F).
15. Cf. the essay on destiny cited in n. 12: “This infallibility of destiny can help us to attain peace of mind . . .” (G VII 119).
16. [See Chapter 6 by Miller in this volume. (eds.)]
17. For the ascription of a similar view to the Stoics, see Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2.153.
18. This methodological point is prominent in the *Specimen dynamicum*: “This method of study seems to me best suited both for the wisdom of the teacher and for the advancement of the learners; we must guard against being more eager to destroy than to construct, and against being tossed about uncertainly, as if by the wind, among the perpetually changing teaching put forth by certain freethinkers. Then after it has curbed the passions of the sects, which is stimulated by the vain lust for novelty, mankind will at length advance with firm steps to ultimate principles in philosophy no less than in mathematics. For if we overlook entirely the harsher things which they say against others, the writings of outstanding men, both ancient and modern, usually contain many true and good things which deserve to be collected and arranged in the public treasury of knowledge. Would that men might choose to do this rather than to waste their time with criticisms that serve only to satisfy their own vanity. Indeed, though fortune has so favored me with the discovery of certain new things of my own that friends often urge me to think only about these, I nevertheless find pleasure in the views of others and appraise each according to its own worth, however this may vary. This may be because I have learned in my widespread activities not to despise anything” (GM VI 235–6/L 436). I examine these issues at greater length in Rutherford (1996).
19. The contrast between three species of fate (the third being the *fatum Mahometanum*) is laid out in greater detail in the preface of the *Theodicy* (G VI 30–1/H 54–5). See also *Theodicy*, secs. 55, 58.
20. Zeno defines “passion” [*pathos*] as “an irrational movement in the soul, or an impulse [*hormê*] in excess” (D.L., 7.110–111; cf. Stobaeus, 2.88,8–90,6 [L-S 65A]). The Stoics divide the passions into four classes, based on whether the object of the passion is present or anticipated, and whether it is judged to be good or evil. These four classes define the generic passions of pleasure (present good), appetite (future good), distress (present evil), and fear (future evil). Hope (*elpis*, *spes*) is mentioned only rarely in surviving Stoic discussions of the passions as the emotional counterpart of fear. See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.80 (“*Si spes est exspectatio boni, mali expectationem esse necesse est*”).

metum”), and Seneca, *Ep.* 5.8, quoted later in the text. Although the evidence is slim, it is plausible to suppose the Stoics would reject most instances of hope (the expectation of a future good) as irrational. Later I consider whether hope might also qualify as a good emotional state (*eupatheia*), specifically an instance of rational desire or wish (*boulêsis, voluntas*).

21. D.L., 7.94.
22. D.L., 7.101–105 (L-S 58 A, B).
23. *The City of God*, 14.9.
24. *Ibid.*, 19.4.
25. *Summa Theologica* II.1, qu. 62.
26. J.-F. Senault, *De l'Usage des Passions*, II.iii.3 (Paris: Fayard, 1987).
27. Cf. *The City of God* 19.4: “Because the philosophers do not want to believe in this happiness [*beatitudinem*] which they do not see, they try to fabricate for themselves here an utterly fraudulent happiness built on a virtue whose insignificance is only matched by its arrogance.”
28. See Gaston Grua (1953), 396–7, 475–505.
29. Cf. the following comment in a 1705 letter to Christian Wolff: “I do not think there can be in created beings a blessedness [*beatitudinem*] which is entirely the enjoyment of prayers, but rather that the true blessedness of a created mind consists in the unimpeded progress to greater goods. It is not enough to enjoy a content and tranquil soul, for that belongs even to fools” (GLW 18). A subsequent letter adds: “If blessedness did not consist in progress, the blessed would be stupefied” (GLW 43).
30. *Monadology*, sec. 90 (G VI 622/AG 224). Cf. secs. 88–89, where Leibniz stresses that divine justice is effected through natural means: “this harmony leads things to grace through the very paths of nature.”
31. To say that Leibniz’s position requires no more than this is not to say that his own Christian beliefs extend no further. They may; my claim is only that nothing beyond this is essential to his criticism of the Stoics.
32. Cf. *New Essays*, IV.viii.9: “If there were neither providence nor an after-life, the wise man’s practice of virtue would be more restricted, since he would refer everything only to his present satisfaction, and even that satisfaction – which has already been exemplified in Socrates, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and other ancients – would not always be as well grounded, in the absence of those broad and beautiful perspectives which are opened up to us by the order and harmony of the universe, extending to an unlimited future; for without them the soul’s tranquility would amount merely to resignation” (RB 432).
33. D.L., 10.129 (L-S 21B).
34. “And so let the highest good rise to that point from which no force can topple it, where there is no approach for pain or hope or fear, or anything that might temper the authority of the highest good. But virtue alone can rise to that point. Only by following in her tracks can we force our way up that slope. She will stand firm and endure all that happens not only patiently but cheerfully [*non patiens tantum sed etiam volens*]; she will know that every difficulty that time brings is a law of nature, and like a good soldier she will bear her wounds and count her scars, and as she dies transfixed by weapons she will love the leader for whom she falls; she will keep in mind that old

- precept – 'Follow God!'. Seneca, *De vita beata* 15.1 (tr. Costa (1994)). Cf. *Ep.* 76.23.
35. According to Seneca, the lives of those who are ruled by the passions "are uneasy and disquieted by alarms of various sorts, and at the very moment of rejoicing the anxious thought comes over them: 'How long will these things last?' . . . By great toil they attain what they wish, and with anxiety hold what they have attained . . . New obsessions take the place of old, hope leads to new hope, ambition to new ambition. They do not seek an end of their misery, but only change the cause." *De brevitate vitae* 17.1, 5 (tr. Basore (1932)).
 36. Leibniz defends the principle that "a lesser good is a kind of evil if it stands in the way of a greater good" (*Theodicy*, sec. 8). In *Reflections on the Common Concept of Justice*, he restricts "true goods" to "whatever serves the perfection of intelligent substances": "It is obvious, therefore, that order, contentment, joy, wisdom, goodness, and virtue are goods in an essential sense and can never be bad." These are contrasted with power, which is "a good in a natural sense . . . because, other things being equal, it is better to have it than not to have it," but which can lead to evil if not united with wisdom and goodness (Mo 48/L 564). These passages are helpfully compared with the position defended by Seneca in *Ep.* 76.16–19.
 37. "It is a great thing . . . when a person of rank can enjoy himself even in illness, misfortune, and disgrace, especially if he can find contentment, not out of necessity because he sees that things must be as they are (this is no more comfort than that of taking a sleeping potion to escape feeling pain), but out of the awakening within himself of a great joy which overcomes these pains and misfortunes. Such joy, which a person can always create for himself when his mind is well-ordered, consists in the perception of pleasure in himself and in the powers of his mind, when a man feels within himself a strong inclination and readiness for the good and the true, and particularly through the profound knowledge which an enlightened understanding provides us" (G VII 87/L 427). Cf. Mo 61/L 569–70. Leibniz's case is strengthened by his emended definition of happiness as "a state of enduring joy," where joy implies "an extraordinary predominance of pleasure" (GLW 171/AG 233). Given this, physical suffering by itself does not preclude being in a state of happiness, provided that suffering is outweighed by pleasure derived from the perception of virtue.
 38. "I require a man to be virtuous, grateful, just, not only for the motive of interest, of hope or of fear, but also of the pleasure that he should find in good actions: else one has not yet reached the degree of virtue one must endeavor to attain. This is what one means by saying that justice and virtue must be loved for their own sake" (G VI 417/H 422).
 39. Thus, hope has both a cognitive and a conative component. Leibniz's account echoes Hobbes's definition of hope as "appetite with an opinion of attaining" (*Leviathan* 6.14). Pace Leibniz, the same is true for the Stoics: passion involves a false judgment about the goodness or badness of an object, but physically it is "an irrational movement of the soul, or an impulse in excess." See the texts cited in n. 20.
 40. "Nature has given us the spurs of desire in the form of the rudiments or elements of suffering, semi-suffering one might say . . . [O]ur continual victory

over these semi-sufferings – a victory we feel when we follow our desires and somehow satisfy this or that appetite or itch – provides us with many semi-pleasures; and the continuation or accumulation of these ... eventually becomes a whole, genuine pleasure” (RB 165).

41. Leibniz makes this point more precisely in a text in which he relates the notion of hope to the basic laws of probability: “If several outcomes are equally likely, and on one outcome I will acquire a thing and on all the others I will not, then the expectation [*spes*] will be some part of the thing proportional to the number of outcomes. Let the number of outcomes be n and the thing itself R , then the expectation will be $s = R/n$... that is, if the outcomes are equally likely, the power [*potestas*] of acquiring a thing on one outcome is some portion of the value of the thing in accordance with the number of [possible] outcomes” (A VI.4, 95).
42. The preface of the *Theodicy*, from which the preceding passage is drawn, makes this point in the strongest terms: “Good disposition, favorable upbringing, association with pious and virtuous persons may contribute much toward placing souls in that propitious condition [of true piety]; but they are most securely grounded in it by good principles. I have already said that insight must be joined to ardor, that the perfections of the understanding must bring to completion those of the will. The practices of virtue, as well as those of vice, may be the effect of a mere habit, one may acquire a taste for them; but when virtue is reasonable, when it is related to God, who is the supreme reason of things, it is founded on knowledge” (G VI 28/H 52). Cf. Gr 580/R 84.
43. For an elaboration of this point, see Rutherford (2001), sec. IV.
44. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 27.3: “There is no other [good] except that which the soul finds for itself within itself. Only virtue keeps lasting joy secure.”
45. The Stoics locate progress (*prokope*) among the “preferred indifferents,” valued for the contribution they make to a life according to nature (D.L., 7.106). For a helpful discussion of the Stoics’ views on moral progress, see Pierluigi Donini (1999), 724–35.
46. *On Common Conceptions* 1063A-B (L-S 61T). Cf. D.L., 7.127: “It is their doctrine that nothing is in between virtue and vice, though the Peripatetics say that progress is in between these. For as, they say, a stick must be either straight or crooked, so a man must be either just or unjust, but not either more just or more unjust, and likewise with the other virtues” (L-S 61I).
47. “So in philosophy we should assume neither progress nor any perception of progress, if the soul discards and purges itself of none of its stupidity, but deals in absolute badness right up to its acquisition of the absolute and perfect good.” *On Moral Progress* 75C (L-S 61S).
48. Chrysippus is quoted as offering this description of the difference between the person on the verge of virtue and the person who has achieved it: “The man who progresses to the furthest point performs all proper functions [*kathêkonta*] without exception and omits none. Yet his life is not yet happy, but happiness supervenes on it when these intermediate actions acquire the additional property of firmness and tenor and their own particular fixity” (Stobaeus 5.906,18–907,5 [L-S 59I]).

49. For Leibniz, therefore, the proper object of our hope is the progressive refinement of our rational nature. Whether this progress is sufficient for happiness depends on the opposition that the pleasures of reason encounter. Leibniz holds that such opposition (bodily pain, emotional suffering, loss of external goods) can more easily be overcome as one's degree of perfection increases. However, there is no designated point at which one can claim invulnerability. It is here that we see most clearly the theological dimension of Leibniz's position. For him, the Christian doctrine of salvation becomes the thesis that at some point in history one may find oneself in a position in which one's joy endures without end. One best prepares oneself for this state through the perfection of the natural powers of will and understanding; yet however much one perfects those powers, one cannot know with certainty that it will be enough to ensure lasting happiness. For it to be enough is to enjoy the fruits of divine grace: to attain that degree of perfection sufficient to guarantee one's happiness. On this, see *Theodicy*, sec. 105: "since the general plan of the universe, chosen by God for superior reasons, causes men to be in different circumstances, those who meet with such as are more favorable to their nature will become more readily the least wicked, the most virtuous, the most happy; yet it will be always by aid of the influence of that inward grace which God unites with the circumstances" (G VI 160–61/H 180–81).
50. A passage in Seneca comes close to capturing Leibniz's position: "We must acknowledge that there are great differences among the very followers of wisdom. One has already made so much progress [*tantum profecit*] that he dares raise his eyes to fortune, but not constantly, for they drop, dazzled by her excessive splendor; another has made so much progress that he is able to match glances with her – unless he has already reached the summit and is full of confidence. Whatever is short of perfection must necessarily be unsteady, at one time progressing, at another falling back or giving way; but it will fall back unless it perseveres in going forward and struggling ahead; for if anyone slackens at all in zeal and faithful application, he must go back. No one can resume his progress at the point where he left off. Therefore let us press on and persevere. There remains much more of the road than we have put behind us; but the greater part of progress is to want to progress [*velle proficere*]" (*Ep.* 71.34–36) (tr. Gummere (1962), with modifications).
51. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the University of California, San Diego. I thank my audience there and at the Toronto conference for their helpful and provocative comments. For their written remarks, I am especially grateful to Karen Detlefson (my commentator in Toronto), Brad Inwood, and Peter Loftson.

Epicureanism in Early Modern Philosophy

Leibniz and His Contemporaries

Catherine Wilson

1. The Reception of Epicureanism Amongst the Moderns

The Epicurean system of natural philosophy and ethics presented a major attraction for seventeenth century philosophers, for whom it offered a powerful alternative to Christian Aristotelianism and the theory of man's corrupted and sinful nature. On the natural philosophy side, it furnished the underlying system – corpuscularianism – of the moderns, or, in seventeenth century terms, the “innovators.” On the ethical side, the revival of the Epicurean doctrine of pleasure is evident in seventeenth century moral philosophy, in which references to happiness, joy, and pleasure begin to take on a more positive tone, though they are constrained by the doubt that a secular morality is possible and by worries over concupiscence. It would be a worthwhile project to trace the reaction to and reinterpretation of each of the major Epicurean doctrines, including the ideational nature of God and the evolution of the functional animal in early modern philosophy. Meanwhile, the efforts of an idealistic, and somewhat authoritarian philosopher, Leibniz, to come to terms with ambient Epicureanism will serve to illustrate this mixed, but, on the whole, highly positive reception.

Assimilating is always a more dangerous philosophical and intellectual strategy than *distinguishing*. Qualifications are needed, and the chapter will supply them in due course. But I suspect that the Epicureanism of the moderns has been underestimated for two reasons that do not amount to justifications. First, the theism of the rationalist philosophers and of Robert Boyle does not fit well with the claim that they (and not only Locke) were participants in an Epicurean revival. Second, the opposition between Cartesians and Gassendists, the latter taken to be representative Epicureans, is salient to commentators who are aware of Gassendi's role as a critic of Descartes's *Meditations*. On the basis of the number of subsequent publications and citations, Cartesianism appears to have been the winner in the contest between them, which Thomas Lennon, following Mersenne, characterized as a battle

between Gods and Giants.¹ Modern philosophy, on this view, elected theism and idealism, successfully repelling the Epicurean threat.

That is one way to look at it, and indeed a useful way, if one is trying to understand the evolution of the discipline called philosophy and the persistence of what might be called an antimaterialist bias that distinguishes it from the natural and social sciences. But from a local, seventeenth and early eighteenth century perspective, it is evident that it *is* Epicureanism that dismantles the Christian-Aristotelian synthesis, offering relief at the same time from the oppressive doctrines of sin and the damnation of the multitude. The Gods, including Descartes and Leibniz, co-operate in this replacement. Were it not for the revival of Epicureanism, materialism could not have had the force it did amongst the *philosophes* – hardly philosophers anymore in the contemporary sense – of the eighteenth century. The notorious libertine La Mettrie even cited Descartes as his inspiration. But the transition was hardly untroubled, as this instance of appropriation suggests. Leibniz accuses Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, and Newton of dangerous and impious ideas. Berkeley accuses Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Bayle of atheism and mortalism.² The conflict between Epicureanism and the Christian-Aristotelian tradition is not a contest between seventeenth century philosophers with opposed allegiances. It is a conflict within each of them, as they try individually to cope with new experimental and observational data, while preserving some cherished remnants of the older theological synthesis.

On the view that neo-Epicureanism was in competition with the main lines of modern philosophy, the perception of Gassendi as a harmless author seems paradoxical.³ By contrast, the penetration of Epicureanism explains why, in the midst of this reclaiming, unmasking, and denouncing, Gassendi first escapes censure, and then comes to be ignored. It is true that Gassendi was a prominent and influential opponent of Aristotle; that, unlike other French Epicureans, he was familiar to his English contemporaries, especially those associated with the Royal Society such as Walter Charleton, Boyle, and Locke. He dominates the field of contemporary Epicurean publications, and his *Life of Epicurus* especially enjoyed a wide readership. And it is often said or implied that Gassendi gave the fortunes of Epicurean atomism a much-needed boost by Christianizing it. But looking at the Epicurean alternative exclusively through Gassendi's system is problematic for several reasons.

First, the seventeenth century "rehabilitation," to borrow Spink's term, of Epicurus was the work of many hands – not only of philosophers and *érudits*, but of poets and fantasists.⁴ Second, *pace* Spink, it is perhaps improper to speak of a rehabilitation. Epicurus and Lucretius had always been popular. Though Lactantius and subsequent Christian authors excoriated Epicureanism at length, this attention served to keep the pagan alternative alive. Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* went through many editions and translations beginning in 1495 (including one in English in 1619). Montaigne

and Charron, writing in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, are distinctly pro-Epicurean. Calvin was compelled to denounce Epicureanism in a work of 1545,⁵ as Meric Casaubon would be in a work of 1668.⁶ The Epicureans surrounding Gassendi, famous in their own time, were Gabriel Naudé, Elio Diodatai, and François de la Mothe de Vayer, and, on the periphery, the storywriter Cyrano de Bergerac, the playwright Molière, and others.⁷ Third, Gassendi's Christianization expurgated Epicurus's most characteristic doctrines, the latter's atheism and anti-providentialism, his thesis of the atomic constitution and mortality of (all of) the soul, and his many-worlds theory. Lisa Sarasohn maintained that Gassendi not only made the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure consistent with a contemplative asceticism but turned Epicurus's recommendation to "live apart" into the basis of a social and even activist practical philosophy.⁸ Gassendi's narrowly doctrinal Epicureanism reduced it to atomism, with God creator *ex nihilo* of the universe and in charge of the atoms.

Before its revival in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, atomism, its founders, and its adherents were often described by its critics as "monstrous" and "insane."⁹ Even the committed corpuscularian Robert Boyle put some distance between himself and his sources by repeating the old story that Lucretius was a madman who had written his poem in his lucid intervals. Boyle suggests that Lucretius wrote the part of his poem concerned with the formation of animals "in one of the fits of frenzy, which some even of his admirers suppose him to have been put into by a philtre given him by either wife or mistress Lucilia . . ."¹⁰ Why was Epicureanism, despite this widely-proclaimed craziness, so appealing? The doctrine of emergent qualities it entailed appeared newly credible as a result of expanded experience with chemical transformations and with optical instruments.¹¹ With Aristotelian hylomorphism rejected, only matter, it seemed, could act on matter. Though the notions of a self-creating universe drifting, like everything else, towards a state of dissolution, atoms as the basis of life and sense, and the finality and nothingness of death strained credulity, they did so in a different way from Christian theism. Lactantius explained Epicureanism's further attractions by reference to the problem of evil. "Epicurus saw that adversities were always befalling the good: poverty, labors, exiles, loss of dear ones; that the evil on the contrary were happy, were gaining in wealth, were given honors. He saw that innocence was not safe, that crimes were committed with impunity; he saw that death raged without concern for mortals . . ."¹² As Lennon suggests, Epicureanism appealed to the anti-authoritarian sentiments of philosophers, as well as their reluctance to accept a facile solution to the problem of evil, and their difficulty in comprehending what eternal life could possibly be. The moral message of Epicureanism – that worrying about death was pointless and that pleasure and self-sufficiency were good – was simple and congenial, provided it could be purified of the *libertinage* with which Cicero, especially, had branded it.

The chief doctrines of Epicurus advanced in his letters and reported maxims and amplified in Titus Carus Lucretius's Latin poem of c. 55 B.C.E. can be summarized as follows. Each has a counterpart belonging to the Aristotelian-Christian view of the world shared by orthodox Catholic and Protestant natural philosophers up to the advent of modern philosophy.

1. There are indestructible, unsplittable atoms; they are the elements of everything.
2. There is an unlimited number of cosmoi that are similar to and dissimilar from ours.
3. Cosmoi form themselves from self-moving atoms, and ultimately collapse and dissipate.
4. Poorly-constructed creatures and unstable worlds are self-eliminating.
5. The soul is made of very fine, tenuous atoms that disperse at death.
6. The Gods are subjective images in the minds of men.¹³
7. Pleasure is the natural and correct aim of all creatures, including humans, and tranquillity is the highest moral virtue.

Compare this with the following elements of the pre-Epicurean revival Christian consensus:

1. Substances are composed of matter and form and act according to their natures.
2. There is only one actual world.
3. God created the world *ex nihilo*.
4. God designed the bodies of creatures to fit their habitats and modes of life.
5. The soul of man is immortal.
6. God is unique and real.
7. Humans are corrupted by an internal original sin, regardless of the external form of life they lead, and their appetite for pleasure reveals their sinfulness.

Though the term Epicureanism rarely appears in Leibniz commentary, Leibniz is commonly understood as its staunch opponent. His substance theory and providentialism look like strong fortifications against Epicurean materialism, atheism, and mortalism. In this, they resemble Descartes's theory of the immaterial soul and an omnipotent knowledge-securing God, and Leibniz devoted much philosophical effort to constructing, maintaining, and repairing them. In this task, he was much assisted by the earlier anti-Epicurean polemics of Cicero and Lactantius.

But Cartesianism was a suspicious philosophy to the orthodox, who evaluated the arguments supporting those fortifications as weak, and increasingly Cartesian immaterialist metaphysics is seen as adjuvant to Cartesian mechanism. Leibniz confessed that the barriers between his own metaphysical

system and heterodoxy were thin. He worried about its collapse into Spinozism – to the seventeenth-century critic, another type of Epicureanism. And it is difficult to provide an alternative to a system without importing much of its structure. To material atoms, Leibniz opposed immaterial atoms, and denied the very possibility of the former. To innate motion, he opposed innate force, and denied even the reality of motion. To the pursuit of pleasure, he opposed the pursuit of the good, and claimed that the continuous pursuit of pleasure is psychologically impossible. To self-selecting combinations of matter, he opposed self-selecting combinations of ideas; to chance, the ubiquity of law and design. To Epicurean mortalism, he opposed the natural immortality of the soul. To insensible corpuscles, he adjoined *petites perceptions*. But what emerged from this protracted engagement was by no stretch of the imagination a version of scholastic creationism, cosmology, and matter-theory and Augustinian ethics. Indeed, it might be called an alter-Epicurean system. Leibniz's metaphysics is atomistic and deterministic; it recognizes the possibility of the self-formation of worlds and the possibility of multiple self-enclosed worlds. It makes the basic entities of the world active. It reinterprets the ontology of matter-and-form as metaphysical doctrine about active and passive force and accepts the radical division between the macroworld of objects with qualities – colours, tastes, and other phenomenological properties – and the microworld of corpuscles invisible to the naked eye of the Epicureans.¹⁴

In the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, considered by some commentators to be the first coherent statement of a metaphysical system, Leibniz asserts divine creation and the perfection of the world, and attacks Spinoza. There are references to possible worlds, but not to fictional worlds, microworlds, or other cosmoi. The providentialist *Discourse* does not look, at first glance, like an Epicurean, or even an alter-Epicurean, work. But one of its intentions is to “reconcile those who hope to explain mechanically the formation of the first tissue of an animal and the whole machinery of its parts, with those who account for this same structure using final causes. Both ways are good, and both can be useful. . . .”¹⁵

I see that those who apply themselves to explaining the beauty of the divine anatomy laugh at those who imagine that a movement of certain fluids that seems fortuitous could have produced such a beautiful variety of limbs, and call these people rash and profane. And the latter, on the other hand, call the former simple and superstitious, comparing them to the ancients who regarded physicists as impious when they maintained that it is not Jupiter that thunders but some matter present in the clouds.¹⁶

The following implications can be drawn from this artfully-worded passage: (1) Those who think that a movement of fluid that seems fortuitous can produce a part of a living creature *are not* necessarily rash and profane; (2) Those who maintain that Jupiter, rather than some matter in the clouds,

thunders *are* simple and superstitious (as Lucretius insisted); (3) The ancients who criticized *their* physicists as impious were simple and superstitious; (4) The providentialists criticized by the moderns are *not* as simple and superstitious as they are alleged to be. In other words, explanations of the sort provided by the ancient physicists are strongly preferred, but one should not criticize as simple and superstitious those persons who see God as responsible for the beauty of our anatomy. The reconciliation of finality and mechanical formation culminating in the theory of the pre-established harmony becomes one of Leibniz's principal themes after 1695.

2. Leibniz's Reactions to Epicureanism

Leibniz's first acquaintance with Epicurean and Lucretian doctrine is difficult to pinpoint. But since he later described himself as having been deeply attracted to atomism in his youth,¹⁷ it may well have antedated his study of Boyle in 1669. It is easy to imagine the effect of the charms of Lucretius's poem on a youth of Leibniz's curiosity and intellectual dispositions. A voracious reader, Leibniz had good access to sources, and if he did not precisely know them at first hand, since Epicurus published nothing, he had them from the best available compilers. In addition to Gassendi, whom he read before he knew anything of Descartes, he refers to Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Philosophers* X, to Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, and to Lucretius's poem. In the *Letter to Thomasius* of 1669, there is a good deal of discussion of material atoms and the theory of qualities and a reference to Cicero on Epicurus as well as to the earliest modern atomists.¹⁸

Leibniz was not at first concerned about the moral import of Epicureanism. He particularly admired Hobbes at this stage of his life, and he seems to have relinquished the theory of hard, indivisible material atoms only gradually. The "concrete" parts of the *Hypothesis Physica Nova* of 1671 employ what appear to be purely material corpuscles, and even in the *Paris Notes* of 1676, material atoms are not decisively banished. Leibniz's frequent references to "vortices" – another favoured Epicurean term – in this pre-Cartesian period suggest a direct reading, or at least a good study of Gassendi, whose *Opera* had been published in 1658.¹⁹ His earliest worries about Epicureanism and his focussed search for a comprehensive alternative appear to surface between 1677 and 1680, after he had read Spinoza's *Ethics* in 1678. (Though Leibniz claimed to find the earlier *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* shocking, he did not associate its doctrines with a specific natural philosophy.) But the *Ethics* worried him.²⁰ This is the beginning of Leibniz's lengthy anti-Cartesian phase. Indeed, he begins to "lump," to employ William James's term, ranging Hobbes with Descartes and Spinoza, and Stoics with Epicureans. All of them deny providence. The antidote to the pernicious influence of all of them is to be found in the Pythagorean-Platonic philosophy. He refers to

Epicureanism as “the view that there is no happiness other than the tranquility of a life here below content with its own lot, since it is madness to oppose the torrent of things.”²¹ Another passage written during this period sums up his moral reaction to Descartes’s Epicurean fable of world-formation in his *Principles of Philosophy*, Pt III, Sect 47.

That is why a God like Descartes’s allows us no consolation other than that of patience through strength. Descartes tells us in some places that matter passes successively through all possible forms, that is, that his God created everything that can be made, and passes successively through all possible combinations, following a necessary and fated order. But for this doctrine, the necessity of matter alone would be sufficient, or rather, his God is merely this necessity or this principle of necessity acting as it can in matter. Therefore, it is impossible to believe that this God cares for intelligent creatures any more than he does for the others; each creature will be happy or unhappy depending upon how it finds itself engulfed in these great currents or vortices. Descartes has good reason to recommend, instead of felicity, patience without hope.²²

Here, a short digression is in order. Amongst the most important texts of Epicurus and Lucretius are the *Letter to Pythocles*, in which the formation of new worlds is described, and the related Lucretian account in Bk V of *De Rerum Natura*: “A cosmos,” according to Epicurus,

is a circumscribed portion of the heavens which contains stars and an earth and all the phenomena, whose dissolution will involve the destruction of everything within it . . . It is possible to grasp that there is an unlimited number of cosmoi; and that such a cosmos can come into existence both within a[nother] cosmos and in an intercosmos, which is what we call the interval between cosmoi . . . when certain seeds of the right sort rush in from one cosmos or intercosmos . . . gradually causing conjunctions and articulations and . . . influxes from [atoms] which are in the right condition, until the cosmos is completed and achieves stability, [i.e.] for as long as the foundations laid can accept additional material.

The sun and the moon and the other heavenly bodies did not come into being on their own and then get included by the cosmos, but they immediately begin to take shape and grow (and similarly for the earth and sea) by means of infusions and rotations of certain natures with fine parts; either breath-like or fire or both . . .²³

A world is construed as an earth and the living things on its surface, its atmosphere, and a set of celestial bodies – that is, everything necessary in the minds of the ancients to sustain life, weather, and generation. The other cosmoi exist at some distance from one another, and are for all practical purposes inaccessible to one another. Lucretius flatly denies creation for the sake of man:

To say . . . that for men’s sake they had the will to prepare the glorious structure of the world, and that therefore it is fitting to praise it as an admirable work of the gods; and to think that it will be everlasting and immortal . . . to feign this and other conceits . . . Memmius, is the act of a fool . . .

Again, whence was a pattern for making things first implanted in the gods, or even a conception of mankind, so as to know what they wished to make and to see it in the mind's eye? Or in what manner was the power of the first-beginnings ever known and what they could do together by change of order if nature herself did not provide a model for creation? For so many first-beginnings of things, smitten with blows and carried by their own weight from infinite time up to the present, have been accustomed to move and meet together, in all manner of ways, and to try all combinations, whatsoever they could produce by coming together, that it is no wonder if they fell into such arrangements, and came into such movements, as this sum of things now shows in its course of perpetual renovation.²⁴

Our world looks orderly to us not because it was uniquely created to be orderly and we were installed in it, but because we are order-perceiving products of the order of a by-chance orderly world. "[T]he atoms did not post themselves purposefully in due order by acts of intelligence, nor did they stipulate what movements each should perform. As they have been rushing everlastingly throughout all space in their myriads, undergoing a myriad changes under the disturbing impact of collisions, they have experienced every variety of movement and conjunction till they have fallen into the particular pattern by which this world of ours is constituted."²⁵ This striking idea – both credible and incredible – was impossible for anyone who had come across it to ignore. (Kant would later write a long, worried, ambivalent book about it, the *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790.)

In the *Principles*, Descartes accounts for the formation of our vortex – that is, our planetary system – claiming that, by the operation of the laws of nature, “matter must successively assume all the forms of which it is capable . . .” Our vortex arose from an initial chaos, as Lucretius speculated in Bk V of *De Rerum Natura*. Descartes explains that from an initial isotropic distribution of “particles of matter” of equal size, all the elements of what he calls the visible world, beginning with the sun, moon, and stars, will eventually emerge.²⁶ All visible form is a result of the assembly of particles, the principles of assembly being left mysterious. Crystals, plants, animals, and meteorological substances such as hail and snowflakes assemble themselves. Descartes dispenses not only with the direct creative action of God but with the intentional formative agents of Renaissance philosophy, including the stars and nature, and entities such as Kepler’s snowflake-forming playful spirit. There is no difference in principle between the formation of inanimate patterned objects, whether vortices or snowflakes, and the formation of animate patterned objects. The baby forms itself in the womb from a mixture of seminal fluids, just like any other object.²⁷ Descartes, however, is somewhat clearer than his predecessors on the determinate and even describable pathways followed by the corpuscles in their interactions. He indicates that God’s role is to establish the laws of nature and, on some accounts, to sustain them by divine concurrence.

Although God's role is important and indispensable in this sense, as is his epistemological role in the more familiar framework of the *Meditations*, Descartes is not a pious author. The ethical posture adopted by humans who find themselves in such a universe is not conceived by him as the dramatic struggle between bestial and ascetic impulses that can lead to heaven or eternal hell. So it is not surprising that some of his contemporaries regarded Descartes as a follower of Epicurus.²⁸ His rejection of the void did not de-classify him, for it was often perceived as insignificant by comparison with his affirmation of corpuscularianism and mechanism. Nor, interestingly, did the assertion of an immortal, incorporeal soul in the *Meditations*, perhaps because commentators of the 1660s and 1670s did not take the *Meditations* very seriously.²⁹ In Cyrano's Epicurean fable *Other Worlds*, written in 1650 and published posthumously in 1657, Descartes is presented as one who denied the vacuum in order to have the honour of upholding the principles of Epicurus.³⁰

In his digest-commentary, *The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, published in 1663, Spinoza had commended the hypothesis of III:47 on the grounds that it was noncontradictory, maximally simple, easy to grasp, and comprehensive.³¹ Spinoza further Epicureanized Descartes's theory of the genesis of the world by referring to the primordia as "seeds."³² The *Ethics* describes the human body as, like all bodies, made up of solid and fluid particles that maintain their proximity to one another during life. The body and the mind (as the idea of the body – that is, an idea had by the body) are subject to the laws of nature. Throughout the work, Spinoza deploys the ethical motif of physical flux vs. emotional calm, and although it is conventional to regard the *Ethics* as a neo-Stoic treatise on how to suppress or dissipate the passions, the claim that the body is a congeries of corpuscles is striking, and the favourable attention given to the emotions of joy and pleasure suggests Epicureanism. The *Ethics* was certainly received as an Epicurean work, by Leibniz, amongst others.³³ According to Leibniz, Spinoza's claim in *Ethics* I:16 that "From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many ways (that is everything which can fall under infinite intellect) . . ." is false, and makes the same mistake that Descartes insinuated, that combinations of particles fall into every possible pattern over time that they possibly can. "Spinoza begins where Descartes leaves off: in naturalism."³⁴

In fact, Leibniz read Descartes through the lens of Spinoza, and concluded that the self-formation of the world, as described by Descartes, could not be integrated with theism. The "baptism" of Epicureanism could not, in his view, be achieved. Leibniz drew from Descartes's claim that all possible configurations of matter are actual (though not contemporaneously actual) the conclusion that moral values were ungrounded in a Cartesian universe. Everything that can possibly happen is either happening now, or has happened, or will happen. There is nothing so horrible, so contrary

to morality and the divine plan, that God will prevent its emergence somewhere, sometime.

Amongst Leibniz's anti-Epicurean texts of 1679 to 1682 is, as far as I know, an unstudied dialogue that takes up the question of cosmogenesis and the appearance of an orderly world through sheer overproduction.³⁵ It is particularly interesting because it does not merely repeat the familiar and rather trite claim that the order and beauty of the world could not have arisen from the chance motions of particles, but engages sympathetically with the possibility that random combination and a process of variation and selection can produce order from chaos. The participants are a marquis, representing an Epicurean in morals and metaphysics, and a priest. The marquis criticizes the priest's presentation of the argument from design as follows:

You maintain that it is providence that forms for example all that is so happily found in the construction of animals. This would be reasonable, if it were only a question of some unique cause; for when we see a poem we do not doubt that a human being composed it, but when it is a question of the whole of nature, it is necessary to reason otherwise. Lucretius, following Epicurus, made use of several exceptions that do harm to your argument taken from the order of things. He says that feet are not made for walking, but humans walk because they have feet; if you ask whence it arises that everything fits together so well in the animal machine as though it had been specially made, Lucretius will tell you that necessity determines that badly made objects perish, and that the well-made ones survive (*se conserve*) and that they alone appear; thus although there are an infinity of badly-made objects, they cannot maintain themselves amongst the others.³⁶

The priest replies:

These people visibly delude themselves, for we see nothing that is only halfway made. How could the badly made objects disappear so quickly and how would they escape our eyes armed with the microscope? On the contrary, the more we penetrate into the interior of nature, the more we are ravished with astonishment. Moreover, there are beauties which do not give one species an advantage in maintaining itself or existing in preference to another. For example the admirable structure of the eyes will not give to one species the advantage of existing more than another.³⁷

The marquis insists that if Epicurus is right to say "that there are and have been an infinite number of worlds of all sorts, amongst which it is necessary that some amongst them are well made or which have been corrected little by little, it is not a great miracle if we find ourselves in a world of a passable beauty."³⁸ The priest replies that this view is not defensible. The appearances suggest that things are not less beautiful and adapted to one another (*concertées*) in other regions of the universe. "I acknowledge nevertheless," the priest concedes, "that this fiction is not impossible, absolutely speaking;

that is to say it does not imply a contradiction when one considers only the reasoning present in the order of things (although there are other reasons that destroy it

absolutely). But it is as little credible as to suppose that a library forms itself one day by a fortuitous concourse of atoms. For it is always more likely that something is done by ordinary ways than to suppose that we have fallen into this happy world by chance. If I found myself transported into a new region of the universe where I saw clocks, furniture, books, ramparts, I would venture everything I possessed that this was the work of a rational creature, even if it were possible absolutely speaking that it was not, and that one can pretend that there is perhaps a country in the finite extension of things where books write themselves, but one would have to have lost one's mind to think that in the country in which I live is the country where books write themselves. The probability is as small as a grain of sand in regard to the whole world. Thus it is morally null, and we have moral certainty that providence governs the world. There are other demonstrations that are absolutely geometric ...³⁹

So Leibniz is clearly dissatisfied at this stage with the theory of a self-forming universe, though he allows that one can "pretend" that our world, and perhaps many others, came about as Epicurus describes the process. The supposition does not appear to contain anything self-contradictory; it is just highly improbable. But its mere possibility is insufficient grounds for believing it, or even for entertaining it seriously, or for accepting the Cartesian variant. Leibniz even hints that he has a "geometric" proof that the orthodox view is correct, and if he does have such a proof, the Epicurean thesis must in fact contain unsuspected contradictions. But there is no such proof in all of Leibniz's writings; the general consensus is that all his complete arguments for Providence and the uniqueness of the world are *a posteriori*. And I think his real attitude towards Epicureanism was as he represents it here, modulo the distracting hint. It is possible and conceivable, but it is also massively unlikely. The ordinary way to get a world is for a God to create it. But Leibniz was too interested in the fascinating possibilities of combinatorial methods to dismiss the self-creating universe as a mad fantasy as his theistic precursors had always done. Even Malebranche acknowledges that there is some truth in the combinatorial account, and Leibniz would soon take up his cue.

Malebranche discusses the Cartesian theory of the formation of worlds in his *Tenth Dialogue on Metaphysics*, through his spokesman Theodore:

Theodore: Very well ... conceive of an indefinite mass of matter from which God wills to fashion a beautiful work, a work which subsists, and all of whose beauties are conserved ... How will he proceed? Will he haphazardly [move around] the parts of matter in order little by little to form the world out of it by following certain laws; or will he rather form it all at once?

Aristes: It is clear to me that ... since the first impression He can communicate to all its parts is sufficient to produce all kinds of works, surely he will not decide to form them little by little, by a certain amount of unnecessary motion.

Theodore [summarizing]: This first impression of widely distributed motion was sufficient to form, in one stroke, the animals and plants which are the most excellent

works God made from matter, and all the rest of the universe. Therefore, Aristes, you were right to say that from each mass of matter God made in a stroke what he wanted to form.⁴⁰

Malebranche claims that the world was created, containing all and only the species it now possesses, at one stroke *ex nihilo* after God “foresaw all the consequences of all the combinations of [every] portion of matter with all others and their various motions, on all the possible hypotheses involving particular general laws.”⁴¹ The theory of preformation backs up the at-one-stroke theory. There is no evolution; the stability of all forms is secured, once for all. God’s attention is devoted to only one world: ours, with its bees, chickens, and human beings. Nevertheless, the Epicurean picture of “parts of matter” combining and recombining in all possible ways before God decides to create a unique world furnishes the background. Apparently, God thinks like an Epicurean, though he creates like a Christian.

Leibniz followed Malebranche on preformation precisely in order to avoid epigenetical theories of the origins of form such as Descartes’s, and to solve the problem of the uniformity of the species from generation to generation. But it is not clear that he subscribed wholeheartedly to the at-one-stroke theory of creation. In his unpublished paper *On the Radical Origination of Things*, Leibniz tried to imagine a self-creating universe that was governed by ethical requirements. He preserves the Epicurean notion of a struggle in an initial chaos amongst individual entities that produces a patterned world by taking on matter for as long as it can, but he tries to build in conditions that will ensure that the patterned world is unique and ethically good. “[O]ut of the infinite combinations and series of possible things, one exists through which the greatest amount of essence is realized.”⁴² His sketchy account of the striving possibles⁴³ is perhaps only a kind of “pretending” that has to be read on a different level from his official theorizing, but it preserves the Epicurean idea of competition-and-elimination of unfit combinations and worlds.

Leibniz does not begin with particles of matter like active and mobile dust-motes that have the power to aggregate into compounds, but with substances that are compossible and that can become parts of coherent worlds. The fundamental unit is an immaterial atom, indivisible and unbounded on some interpretations, a tiny animal on other interpretations, but possessed of sensation and activity, and bearing its whole future existence inside itself. But like the Lucretian atom, the Leibnizian substance is eternal, and a process in some way analogous to the drifting and jostling of the atoms seems to occur, resulting in some viable and some non-viable worlds, before our world, with its own nomic regularities, comes into being. As Epicurus describes “seeds of the right sort . . . gradually causing conjunctions and articulations and . . . influxes by [atoms] which are in the right condition, until the cosmos is completed and achieves stability, [i.e.] for as long as the

foundations laid can accept additional material,” Leibniz suggests that the actual world is formed by the accumulation of compossible substances until the maximum of richness and variety is reached. On one interpretation of this process, an infinity of possible worlds form themselves, and God subsequently actualizes the best of these possible worlds. As Malebranche too implies, God is a selector of worlds, not a molder and fashioner of worlds who designs the wing of the fly and the eye of the eagle. Leibniz offers a progressive account of coming-into-being that stands intermediate between the hypothesis that what we call our world is a stage in cosmic evolution and the traditional doctrine that the moment of creation fixes essences and appearances once for all, or until God decides to annihilate the world.

Before going on to look at how the Epicurean doctrine of the plurality of worlds fares in Leibniz, a discussion of his worries about the moral import of Epicureanism is in order.

3. Worries about Decadence

Leibniz was aware of three important facts relevant to the conflict between Epicureanism and the Christian consensus. First, he knew that there was room for doubt about the dogmas of revealed religion on which the consensus was based.⁴⁴ Second, he was aware that Epicurus, and Spinoza too, had led exemplary lives.⁴⁵ Third, he was convinced that latter day Epicureans were untypical of the master.⁴⁶ Perhaps his earliest worries were about the fatalistic and indifferentist aspects of Epicureanism, but he was also concerned about vice and viciousness.

Increasingly, Leibniz seemed to be worried about the cultural effects of Epicureanism as a popular philosophy. He believed that it inspired evil men and that it was accordingly fair to describe it as false and evil teaching.⁴⁷ Pierre Bayle’s dictionary article “Epicurus” gave Epicurus rather favourable treatment, and this may have alarmed Leibniz, whose disapproving attitude comes out strongly in the period of the *New Essays* (composed c. 1704) and the *Theodicy* (1710). As Leibniz says in the *New Essays*, the disciples and imitators of Epicurus and Spinoza:

... believing themselves to be relieved of the inhibiting fear of an overseeing Providence and of a threatening future, they give their brutish passions free rein and applying their thoughts to seducing and corrupting others. If they are ambitious and rather callous, they are capable of setting fire to the four corners of the earth for their pleasure or advancement – I knew men of this stamp whom death has carried off. I even find that somewhat similar opinions, by stealing gradually into the minds of men of high station who rule the rest and on whom affairs depend and by slithering into fashionable books, are inclining everything towards the universal revolution with which Europe is threatened . . .⁴⁸

Epicurean tranquillity does not strike the modern reader as a platform for personal rapaciousness, but historically matters had developed otherwise. Epicurus says explicitly that “when we say pleasure is the goal we do not mean the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures of consumption, as some believe, either from ignorance and disagreement or from deliberate misinterpretation, but rather the lack of pain in the body and disturbance in the soul. For it is not drinking bouts and continuous partying and enjoying boys and women, or consuming fish and the other dainties of an extravagant table, which produces a pleasant life, but sober calculation. . . . [P]rudence is the source of all the other virtues, teaching that it is impossible to live pleasantly without living prudently, honourably and justly . . .”⁴⁹ Yet this was not the lesson internalized by many of his followers. The historian of morals W.H. Lecky comments in this connection that, in the period of the Roman Empire, Stoicism alone amongst the ancient moral philosophies retained ethical credibility: “Epicureanism had, indeed, spread widely in the Empire, but it proved little more than a principle of disintegration, or an apology for vice, or at best the religion of tranquil and indifferent natures animated by no strong moral enthusiasm. . . . A school which placed so high a value on ease and pleasure was eminently unfit to struggle against the fearful difficulties that beset the teachers of virtue amid the anarchy of a military despotism . . . [T]he Epicureans, . . . elevated conceptions of what constitutes the true happiness of men, were unintelligible to the Romans, who knew how to sacrifice enjoyment, but who, when pursuing it, gravitated naturally to the coarsest forms.”⁵⁰ This was perceived to be true in the mid-seventeenth century as aristocratic dissipation (or at least knowledge of its extent) increased, and the explosion of printed books furthered the dissemination of careless and obscene works. Epicurean poetry instructed readers that life was brief and followed by an endless sleep, that men and animals were no different and had the same pleasures and desires, and that one ought to enjoy life to the fullest as long as possible.⁵¹ Some of this libertine poetry went further: Spink singles out for mention Claude de Chauvigny, whom he describes as a courtier of the debauched Gaston d’Orléans, Felix Gaiffe, the author of a survey of vice called *L’énvers du Grand Siècle*, and Claude le Petit, author of *La chronique scandaleuse ou Paris ridicule*, published in Amsterdam in 1668. Le Petit’s *Bordel des Muses* Spink describes as “the pathetic production of an obviously sick mind.”⁵²

Perhaps naively, Leibniz thought that the most effective attack on cultural Epicureanism was to question the foundational status of the Epicurean atom, while endorsing the corpuscular theory of qualities and insisting on mechanism of an unusual degree of exceptionless rigour. He tries to show that the mobile, extended atom cannot exist: No matter how useful and progressive the chemistry and physiology of tiny particles in motion is and will continue to be, one must keep in mind that the entities employed in its explanations are not actually *real*. The notion of an extended but indivisible particle

is incoherent; a perfectly hard particle cannot take part in physical interactions; and extended material atoms have no principle of cohesion. He later argues that because motion is a purely relative phenomenon, particles cannot have motion, but only force.⁵³ The Leibnizian monad, meanwhile, functions as an alter-atom. It is perfectly bounded and defined, exists in a multiplicity – indeed an infinity of different forms – and the appearances supervene on it. It is the indissoluble unit of which all things are composed. Its immateriality and inherent perception and appetite at the same time render it functional in a theistic framework in which eternal reward and punishment after the death and decomposition of the body are considered, if not demonstrable certitudes, at least what one is obliged to believe on faith. Death is certainly, in its initial phases, which may continue for a long time, a long and drowsy sleep; it is not the nothingness of the Epicureans; but it is not compatible with full awareness either.⁵⁴

4. The Plurality of Worlds

Alexandre Koyré (1953) made much of the idea that the explosion of the size of the known universe, thanks to Copernicus's determination of the true distance of the stars from the earth and each other, was disorienting to Europeans. It was no longer clear what "the world" meant, once the enclosed Aristotelian cosmos was declared a physical and mathematical impossibility. In the writings of Aristotle and the scholastics, it refers to the ensemble of phenomena, terrestrial and celestial, that we can perceive, and Descartes continues to use it in this sense to provide an artificial sense of continuity. But in the post-Copernican period, the term can also mean "our vortex as seen from somewhere beyond the surface of the earth," or "the entire system of vortices as God might perceive them."⁵⁵

The Epicureans had anticipated the new, open sense of world. The ancients thought a great deal about other worlds, including other microworlds and worlds parallel to ours. I have already noted the Epicurean reference to the formation of new worlds in the intercosmic regions. In the *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus refers to it again:

There is an unlimited number of cosmoi and some are similar to this one and some are dissimilar. For the atoms, which are unlimited, . . . are also carried away to very remote distances. For atoms of the sort from which a world might come to be or by which it might be made are not exhausted [in the production of] one world or any finite number of them, neither worlds like this one, nor worlds unlike them. Consequently, there is no obstacle to the unlimitedness of worlds.⁵⁶

The open universe foretold by the philosopher and the poet, and confirmed by the astronomers, was welcomed with great enthusiasm. The suggestion of some earlier historians that anxiety and demoralization accompanied these giddy discoveries is not entirely accurate.⁵⁷ For it turned out that

our world was not, as the theologians had claimed, the sinkhole of the universe, sodden and groaning with original sin, but another floating, shining planet. Bishop Tempier's Condemnations of 1277 had banned the teaching of the doctrine that there is only one possible world in order to give free rein to God's creative power, but Renaissance writers happily introduced other actual worlds, backing them up with the same appeal to divine power. Bruno claimed in *De Immenso* of 1586 that "The possible and the actual, in sort, identical in God, must be coextensive in the temporal order. Hence an infinity of beings and of worlds must exist, in all possible modes."⁵⁸ Some of the worlds and their inhabitants, he claimed, must be superior to ours.⁵⁹ "Why," he asked, "should the infinite capacity be frustrated, the possibility of the existence of infinite worlds be cheated, the perfection of the divine image be impaired – that image which ought rather to be reflected back in a mirror as immeasurable as itself."⁶⁰ Bruno's execution by burning at the stake in 1600 made the topic of other actual worlds a sensitive one, but only forty or fifty years later, fantasies of interplanetary travel and the discovery of new worlds in the sun and moon begin to appear. Pierre Borel published a *Discours nouveau prouvant la pluralité des mondes* arguing that the moon and stars were inhabited, and Cyrano de Bergerac wrote in 1649 and published in 1657 an *Histoire comique ou États et Empires de la lune*.⁶¹ In the story, the author visits the utopian projector Tomasso Campanella, who is living in the sun, where they discuss Descartes's Epicureanism. Bernard de Fontenelle's *Conversations sur la pluralité des mondes* appeared in 1686.

Descartes seems to alternate between the various senses of "world." Sometimes he treats our solar system – all the visible phenomena – as the world; at other times, the whole ensemble of all the vortices, including those that are not part of the visible world, constitute the world. Employing the closed sense, he states that "all the bodies in the universe are contiguous and interact with each other."⁶² Employing the open sense, he says that "[S]ince our mind is of such a nature as to recognize no limits in the universe, whoever considers the immensity of God and the weakness of our senses will conclude that . . . there may be other bodies beyond all the visible fixed stars . . ."⁶³ There are many – an indefinite number – of solar systems or "vortices" in space. Because it is difficult or impossible to traverse or escape from a given vortex, it is unclear how all the bodies in the universe could be said to interact with each other.

Descartes leaves open the question as to whether there are other planets, with other minerals, plants, animals, and rational creatures (assuming God endowed their mechanical bodies with souls), that have formed themselves from the swirling mass of particles present at the birth of the universe. In Leibniz, the same ambiguity is present. Leibniz frequently talks of the world, or the universe, as a closed system in which all constituents perceive one another and interact. "There is no individual created substance so imperfect that it does not act on all the others and is not acted upon by all others,

no substance so imperfect that it does not contain the entire universe, and whatever is, was or will be in its complete notion . . . ”⁶⁴ But he could not help but catch some of the ambient enthusiasm for radically different other worlds, within our world and beyond it. It is accordingly unclear how far he understood the interperception principle to operate. If the scope of the principle extends beyond our earth, at least to our solar system, does it extend to other vortices? Could the resulting picture of intervortical confused omniscience have made any intuitive sense or have had any intuitive appeal for Leibniz or for anyone else?

As we have already seen, Leibniz rejected Cartesian multiple worlds on the grounds that their plenitude ensured that some of them would contain moral abominations inappropriate to a God-governed universe. During his atomism-friendly phase, as might be expected, he was not quite so opposed to multiple worlds fully isolated from ours. He was intrigued in April of 1676 by the idea of another world existing invisibly alongside ours:

... [I]t does not follow from this [the eternity and infinity of our world] that there is not another world, or other minds which cohere among themselves in a way which is different from that which holds in our case . . . God is equally present both to this and to that world, for there could be a different law of nature in that world.⁶⁵

In December 1676, however, he seems to have taken up a strong stance against the plurality of worlds:

There is no need for the multitude of things to be increased by a plurality of worlds; for there is no number of things which is not in this one world, and indeed in any part of it.

To introduce another genus of existing things, and as it were another world which is also infinite, is to abuse the name of existence; for it cannot be said whether those things exist now or not.⁶⁶

And this rejection is generally taken to be Leibniz’s all-things-considered or mature view. In the *Theodicy*, he defines “the world” as “the whole succession and the whole agglomeration of all existent things, lest it be said that several worlds could have existed in different times and places.” For, he continues, “they must needs be reckoned all together as one world, or if you will, as one Universe.”⁶⁷ The other vortices, on this reading, are parts of our world, and just as we perceive, indistinctly, what is taking place on Jupiter, we must perceive what is taking place in the heart of distant stars that are too faint to be seen from earth.

References to other cosmoi emerge again in the 1704 *New Essays*. There, Leibniz refers to another extraterrestrial world, that described by Christiaan Huygens’s father.

It is on analogy that M. Huygens judges, in his *Cosmotheoros* that the other principal planets are in a condition much like our own, except for differences which are bound to arise from their different distances from the sun . . . One could say, more

or less, that as in Harlequin's lunar empire it is "just like here." . . . Until we discover telescopes like those of which M. Descartes held out hope, which would let us pick out things no bigger than houses on the lunar surface, we shall be unable to settle what there is on any globe other than ours, Our conjectures about the inner parts of terrestrial bodies will be more useful and more open to confirmation . . .⁶⁸

Note that Leibniz suggests that attempted telescopic investigations of other planetary worlds are likely to be less fruitful than microscopical investigations of our world. He also asserts a principle of uniformity. Other worlds are probably less strange than imagined by the poets, and it is better to study what is before us than to fantasize. But he cheerfully allows that there may be other species in other world-systems whose existence contributes to the plenitude of the whole:

I believe that the universe contains everything that its perfect harmony could admit. It is agreeable to this harmony that between creatures which are far removed from one another, there should be intermediate creatures, though not always on a single planet or in a single planetary system.⁶⁹

In the *Theodicy*, Leibniz ascribes the one-world view to the Ancients, by whom he of course means the Aristotelians, not Epicureans:

It seemed to the ancients that there was only one earth inhabited, and even of that men held the antipodes in dread: the remainder of the world was, according to them, a few shining globes and a few crystalline spheres. Today . . . it must be acknowledged that there is an infinite number of globes, as great or greater than ours, which have as much right as it to hold rational inhabitants, though it follows not at all that they are human. It is only one planet, that is to say one of the six principal satellites of our sun; and as all fixed stars are suns also, we see how small a thing our earth is in relation to visible things . . .⁷⁰

Are these one-world or many-world theistic or Epicurean speculations? Again, I do not think Leibniz asked himself this question. The most natural way to think of these other systems is as regulated by interperception and mutual co-ordination amongst their inhabitants, but as isolated from our perception, though this interpretation is at odds with his doctrine of "confused omniscience." In the *Paris Notes*, he had suggested that what begin as separate and isolated cosmoi will eventually come into perceptual relations, into a single "theatre."⁷¹ Perhaps his view is that interperception, enabled by instruments and expanded interplanetary travel opportunities, will, in the long run, unify what were separate, epistemically closed worlds into a single world of interperceivers.

The plurality of worlds hypothesis is not easy for a serious theist to entertain. For the existence of other, planetary worlds makes the creation of man, the Garden of Eden, and all the historical events leading up to the special revelation of Jesus and its predicted apocalyptic aftermath problematic. How can this history be consequential if there are rational beings in other worlds?

And if there are no other rational beings anywhere, how can this history be consequential, since the Earth is only one tiny planet? The moral aspirations required by Christianity seem to make sense only in a bounded Aristotelian world. Leibniz had to come to terms with this problem, and he did so in various ways. One might say that he solves Bruno's problem of the conflict between God's infinite power and the existence of only one world by giving the one world infinite capacity and making it multiply reflective to compound its immensity. He begins to develop the first real theory of possible worlds and counterpart individuals. He also allows that there may be remote corners of the actual world in which fictions are played out.⁷² Whatever is compossible with "our" substances on Earth in other words must actually exist in some corner of the universe. Leibniz decides that the popular romance of *Astrea* is possible "because it does not imply any contradiction." He does not commit himself on the question whether it is compossible with what we know to exist and hence is actual as well. Compossibility supports the one-world picture: If anything actual is compossible with our terrestrial substances, it must exist somewhere in our world, not merely in some other world compossible with our world. But the corner of the world in which it exists may be very remote. Yet another strategy, at least temporarily effective for reconciling the probability of other worlds with theism, is to turn from the telescope to the microscope.⁷³ To Arnauld in 1687, he writes, "There is no particle of matter which does not contain a world of innumerable creatures, organized as well as massed together."⁷⁴ In these speculations, he seems to be following Cyrano who, thirty years earlier, and well before the great enthusiasm surrounding Leeuwenhoek's and Hooke's discoveries with the microscope beginning with the publication of *Micrographia* in 1665, had written as follows:

It remains for me to prove that there are infinite worlds within an infinite world. Picture the universe, therefore, as a vast organism. Within this vast organism the stars, which are worlds, are like a further series of vast organisms, each serving inversely as the worlds of lesser populations such as ourselves, our horses, etc. We, in our turn, are also worlds from the point of view of certain organisms incomparably smaller than ourselves, like certain worms, lice, and mites. They are the earths of others, yet more imperceptible. So, just as each single one of us seems to this tiny people to be a great world, perhaps our flesh, our blood, and our minds are nothing but a tissue of little animals, nourishing themselves, lending us their movements, allowing themselves to be driven blindly by our will (which acts as their coachman), carrying us about, and all together producing that activity which we call life.⁷⁵

5. Conclusion

A few years before his death, Leibniz, according to his letters, experienced a profound conversion in his estimation of the intellectual merits of Descartes, whose achievements he had up to then belittled and whose motives he had

habitually queried. After the calculus debacle, he had new enemies – English mathematicians – and perhaps he needed new friends, even if they were long dead. The English could now be tagged with godlessness and with deviation from the truth path of Cartesian (corpuscularian) mechanism. So perhaps it is not surprising that in 1714, looking back on his own development, Leibniz found it especially pertinent to mention his early adherence to classical atomism. He explained his intellectual development to Remond as follows: “Since the atomic theory satisfies the perceptual imagination, I gave myself to it [in his schoolboy days] and it seemed to me that the void of Democritus or Epicurus, together with their incorruptible atoms, would remove all the difficulties. It is true that this hypothesis can satisfy mere physical scientists, and assuming that there are such atoms, and giving them suitable motions and figures, there are few material qualities which they could not explain if we knew enough of the details of things . . .”⁷⁶ Seven months earlier he had compared the mechanists with the formalists (Platonists and Aristotelians) and had claimed to “have penetrated into the harmony of these different realms and to have seen that both sides are right . . .”⁷⁷

It is common to read these passages as indicating that Epicureanism was a juvenile position that was fully transcended, not merely subsumed, in Leibniz’s idealism. Did he not endeavour to show that the material atom is a contradiction, that the basic constituents of the world are immaterial and soul-like, that the person is immortal and indestructible? Leibniz argues persistently that God is the designer and author of the world we inhabit, and responsible for all its beauties, and that we have excellent reason to believe, from an observation of nature, that our good and evil deeds must be compensated for and punished in the hereafter. He attacks tranquillity as a moral goal, and tries to show that a constant state of pleasure unrelieved by intervals of pain or anticipation is impossible.⁷⁸ But, in his own way, Leibniz defended and advanced the cause of Epicureanism. He rejected form-and-matter and the direct operation of spiritual agencies and argued that the basic constituents of the world must be indivisibles whose spontaneous activity can produce the very different visible order. He insisted that his insensible perceptions were fully “as important to pneumatology as insensible corpuscles are to natural philosophy, and [that] it is just as unreasonable to reject the one as the other on the grounds that they are beyond the reach of our senses.”⁷⁹ He described the formation of the universe by reference to the striving of possible substances to combine into sustainable worlds. He theorized that there were many little worlds and far-away worlds in each of which living creatures carry on their business unknown to us. He did not hesitate, following Locke’s lead, to discuss the role of pleasure, desire, love, and suffering, in the human economy, and he even characterized “happiness” in a strikingly non-Augustinian way as “a lasting pleasure, which cannot occur without a continual progress to new pleasures.”⁸⁰ “Appetition,” a neutral term that integrates the opposed notions of “will” and “concupiscence”

under a more useful and naturalistic concept than either, becomes one of two basic features of the soul, along with perception. Ethically, Leibniz remained implacable in his belief that justice must be served by God, and that the world must give evidence of its selection by a morally well-intentioned being, but he was clearly repelled by the doctrine of the damnation of the majority of the human race.⁸¹

Neither Leibniz nor Boyle nor any seventeenth century philosopher, with one remarkable exception noted later, would have felt any inclination to characterize atomism contemptuously as a fantasy. Its classification as doctrine alters substantially over the long period of its reception. What was originally dismissed as the product of a drug-induced delirium, or the raving of deranged men, becomes a poetic fancy, then a hypothesis that is comprehensive *but* admittedly speculative (Descartes), then a hypothesis that is probable *but* radically incomplete (Boyle), and then one that is comprehensively true for natural science *but* metaphysically false (Leibniz). The atom, at first a mere object of thought, becomes a laboratory subject. Philosophers, meanwhile, come to terms with the invisible material constituents of our world, and with the implications of their motive and formative powers for theology, ethics, and natural science, but only gradually, and, indeed, reluctantly.

Accordingly, any simple division of seventeenth-century philosophers into Epicureans and their opponents is misleading. Almost any philosopher could call any other philosopher an atheist, an Averroist, or an Epicurean, or suggest that he had ... tendencies ... or that his work conveyed unintended ... implications. These and similar accusations are hurled as well as whispered in a way that criss-crosses any division between rationalists and empiricists, Cartesians and their opponents. The thesis that most well-known seventeenth-century philosophers *were* Epicureans who found other Epicureans to quarrel with because Epicureanism had become, in some respects, a virtually irresistible philosophy might seem simplistic – or merely confused. But one of its virtues is that it explains this general, and at the same time rather patternless, agitation and alarm. The revival of Epicureanism, however compelling its chief doctrines now appeared in the light of the new astronomical, physico-mathematical, chemical, and microscopical discoveries, was not a smooth process in a Christian culture. Eminent religious authorities had denounced it, as had the famous exemplar of pagan virtue, Cicero. The taint of Roman imperial decadence subsequently infected the original doctrine, and the name of Epicurus became a magnet for early seventeenth-century anti-authoritarianism and libertinage that no respectable philosopher could wish to support. The ubiquity of its principal doctrines might also help to explain the relative neglect of Gassendi. Gassendi did not represent a novel and dangerous, or covert and insidious form of Epicureanism, and no one needed to take him to task and expose his errors.

The only early modern philosopher thoroughly immune to the appeal of Epicureanism was the young George Berkeley. Berkeley, in his earliest and best known writings, refused to come to terms with it, rejecting corpuscularianism and the doctrine of latent and manifest qualities, and, unlike Leibniz, did not provide an alter-Epicurean substitute. But the price Berkeley paid for distancing himself so thoroughly from Epicureanism was to be considered merely an ingenious maker of paradoxes.

Notes

1. This is the conclusion of Thomas M. Lennon, who, in his magisterial *The Battle of the Gods and Giants* (Lennon 1993), describes the Epicurean Gassendists (Giants) as joined in an issue in which “they were invincible even if they were incapable of winning it” against the theistic Cartesians (Gods.) Materialism and utilitarianism lost the fight against idealism and authoritarianism. The systems of Malebranche, Leibniz, and Berkeley, on this interpretation, succeeded in holding the philosophical line against materialism, and the Gassendist contribution to empirical science was insufficient to compensate. Margaret Osler in *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy* (Osler 1994) concludes that there is an ongoing dialect between Gassendist and Cartesian approaches and assumptions. Like Lennon, she organizes her presentation as a study of contrasting mentalities, arguing that Descartes and Gassendi have different epistemologies, different theological presuppositions, and different explanatory programs.
2. Berkeley, *The Theory of Vision ... Vindicated and Explained Works* I:253–5; quoted in Lennon (1993), 375.
3. Barry Brundell in a passage noted by Lennon remarks with justice that Epicureanism was not looked upon in the seventeenth century as an especially offensive philosophy and that Gassendi did not know that he was being shocking. See Brundell’s (1987), 138. Lennon’s position is also that Gassendism was not fearsome and did not mobilize supporters and opponents in the same way as Cartesianism. Lynn Joy (1987) takes the position that Gassendi, as a humanist scholar, was in some ways dysynchronous with his century.
4. J.S. Spink (1960).
5. Jean Calvin, *Contre la secte fantastique et furieuse des Libertins qui se nomments spirituelz*, Geneva, 1545.
6. Meric Casaubon, *Of credulity and incredulity, in things natural, civil and divine, Wherein. . . ; Epicurus his cause, discussed, and the juggling and false dealing, lately used to bring him and atheism, into credit, clearly discovered: the use and necessity of ancient learning against the innovating humour, all along proved, and asserted*. London, T. Garthwait, 1668.
7. See Lennon’s chapter “Dramatis Personae” in his (1993); as well as René Pintard (1943) and Françoise Charles-Daubert’s (1998) short survey.
8. Sarasohn (1982), 239–260; 241; 257. This interpretation is qualified in her (1991).
9. Cicero refers to “... the monstrous assertion ... of Democritus, or perhaps before him Leucippus also, that there are a number of particles, ... from which the earth and sky were formed, not through the compulsion of any natural

- law, but through a certain accidental concurrence" (*De Natura Deorum* XXIV, tr. Brooks). "Can any sane person," he asks, "think that all this grouping of the stars, and this vast ordering of the heavens, could have resulted from atoms coursing to and fro fortuitously and at random?" (ibid., XXIV). Lactantius, a reader of Cicero, refers to the atomists' dreams and "wild ravings" (tr. Deferrari, p.10).
10. Boyle, *A Requisite Digression Concerning Those that Would Exclude a Deity Intermeddling with Matter*, in Stewart (1991). Boyle was impressed by the critique of "that witty father Lactantius." Ibid., 168; *Works* (1744) I:449.
 11. On reductive explanation (and its limits) in Epicurus, see David Sedley (1988).
 12. Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, Bk III: Ch 17, tr. McDonald, p.208. Cf. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2. 1101–1103; 5. 195–234.
 13. Epicurean theology is subtle, but it is evident that Epicurus believed that religion was ideational. Cicero refers to Posidonius's opinion that "Epicurus has no belief in their existence, and . . . what he said on the subject of the immortal gods he said for the sake of deprecating odium" as well-grounded (*De Natura Deorum* XLIV). "[Epicurus] is the only one who saw, first, that the gods exist because nature herself has impressed a conception of them on the souls of everyone" (Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 1.43–56 in Inwood and Gerson (1994), 51 (henceforth: "*Epicurus Reader*"). It is the existence of a shared, spontaneous, innate idea of god "not established on the basis of social convention or law, but . . . a solid and harmonious consensus of all men" (ibid.,) that makes discourse (investigation and debate) about god possible. God is "socially-constructed," we would say nowadays, but the term "god" is nonetheless meaningful. Epicurus himself states that "one ought to believe that god is an indestructible and blessed animal, in accordance with the general conception of god commonly held" (*Letter to Menoeceus*, D.L. 10.122; *Epicurus Reader*, 28), and that "gods do exist, since we have clear knowledge of them" (D.L. 10. 123; *Epicurus Reader*, 28). According to Cicero, the Epicureans, to avoid the inference that the gods were composed of atoms like everything else, and were perishable, ascribed to them quasi-bodies. (*Nature of the Gods*, 1.71; op cit., 55). Generally, he thinks their theory is confused and a failure (ibid. 1.103ff.; op. cit., 56–7). Lucretius goes further in supposing that the Theory of Gods is based in hallucinations, dream-images. "Already in those early days men had visions when their minds were awake, and more clearly in sleep, of divine figures, dignified in mien and impressive in stature" (*On the Nature of the Universe* Bk V, 206–7). They mistakenly ascribed the round of the seasons, the violence of the weather, and the celestial regularities to the Gods (ibid.).
 14. Epicureanism is semi-reductionistic about sensory qualities; Lucretius has both eidetic "films" and non-eidetic collections of particles that stimulate the perception of qualities – that is, smooth atoms can give rise to a taste of sweetness, jagged, to bitterness (Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, Bk 4, tr. Latham, 148f.). (As this chapter is not about Lucretius but the reception of Lucretius, I have used the more poetic translation of Latham's in preference to the scholarly translation of W.H.D. Rouse.)
 15. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, PE 54.
 16. Ibid.

17. Leibniz told Nicholas Remond in his late seventies that he had been extremely satisfied with Gassendi's views when he first began to abandon scholastic views in his schoolboy days. Letter to Remond, July 1714, in Loemker (1969) (hereafter cited as *Philosophical Papers*), 657.
18. Leibniz, *Letter to Thomasius*, April 20/30 1669, in *Philosophical Papers*, 99.
19. "So all things come from globes [corpuscles], and even if globes were not the fundamental elements, yet there would always be a return to globes . . ." ("A Chain of Wonderful Demonstrations about the Universe," December 12, 1676, in *De Summa Rerum*, tr. and ed. by Parkinson (1992) (hereafter cited as DSR), 109.
20. The standard source on Leibniz and Spinoza is Friedmann (1962).
21. Leibniz, *On the Two Sects of Naturalists*, in Ariew and Garber (1989) (hereafter cited as PE), 282.
22. Leibniz, Letter to Molanus, PE 242. [For more on this theme, see Chapter 4 by Rutherford in this volume (eds.).]
23. Epicurus, *Letter to Pythocles*, D.L. 10.89f.; *Epicurus Reader*, 20–21.
24. Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, tr. Rouse and Smith, Book V: 156ff.
25. Ibid. Bk II:1055 ff. tr. Latham, 57.
26. Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, in CSM I: 257.
27. Descartes, Letter to Mersenne, 20 February 1639, in A-T 2: 525.
28. Lennon (1993) provides a wealth of evidence from seventeenth-century sources and contemporary historians of science to this effect; see esp. 9–17.
29. The rehabilitation of Descartes as a Catholic philosopher is often ascribed to Malebranche. According to Lennon (1993), "Malebranche . . . emerges as the Cartesian epitome of views that are to be associated with the seventeenth-century gods" (239).
30. See p. 213 of Strachan's translation.
31. Tr. Shirley (1998), 87ff.
32. Ibid. Cf. Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus*, D.L. 10.74; *Epicurus Reader*, 16.
33. A number of articles in *Archiv de Philosophie* 57 (1994) are addressed to the topic of Spinoza's Epicureanism. The best is Jacqueline Lagrée (1994b).
34. Leibniz, *Comments on Spinoza's Philosophy*, PE, 277.
35. Leibniz *Conversation du marquis de pianese et du père emery eremite ou dialogue de l'application qu'on doit avoir à son salut*, Vorausedition (Akademie Ausgabe), Munster (1989), Faz 8:1786–1823.
36. Leibniz, *Conversation*, *ibid.*, 1808.
37. Ibid., 1808–9.
38. Ibid., 1809.
39. Ibid., 1810.
40. Malebranche, (1997) 189f.
41. Ibid., 197.
42. Leibniz, "On the radical origination of things," *Philosophical Papers*, 487.
43. The most authoritative discussion of Leibniz's views and the possible conflict with more Malebranchian accounts of creation remains that of David Blumenfeld (1973). For criticism, see Christopher Shields (1986).
44. He recommends prudence, however: "No prohibition can compel a man to stay with an opinion, because beliefs are inherently involuntary; but he can

- and should abstain from teaching a doctrine which is thought to be dangerous, unless he finds that his conscience compels him to do it" (Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* (1981) (hereafter *New Essays*), 519–520.
45. Ibid., 462. Bayle had made a point of the probity of atheists in his *Pensées sur la comète* of 1680, and Gassendi defended Epicurus's virtue in the preface to his *De vita et moribus Epicuri libri octo* of 1647.
 46. Leibniz, *New Essays*, 462.
 47. Though not without qualification, for example, "... There is something good and sound in the false and evil teaching of Epicurus, to the effect that there is no need to say that the soul changes the impulses of the body ..." Reply to the Thoughts on the System of Pre-established Harmony Contained in the Second Edition of Mr. Bayle's Critical Dictionary, Article Rorarius" (1702) in *Philosophical Papers*, 578.
 48. NE 462. Cf. Lactantius's reference in, *The Workmanship of God*, 54: 97 to "... vicious and nefarious men, who pollute all things with lusts, plague others with killings, defraud them, steal and perjure; they spare neither their relatives nor their parents, and they ignore laws and even God himself."
 49. Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, D.L. 10.132; *Epicurus Reader*, 30–1.
 50. Lecky (1955), 175–6.
 51. Charles-Daubert (1998), 74ff.
 52. Spink (1960), 136–7.
 53. Catherine Wilson (1982).
 54. Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and of Grace*, *Philosophical Papers*, 637–8; *New Essays*, 55, 161–2.
 55. Koyré (1953).
 56. Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus*, D.L. 10.46; *Epicurus Reader*, 8.
 57. According to A.O. Lovejoy (1964), "The geocentric cosmography served rather for man's humiliation than for his exaltation, and ... Copernicanism was opposed partly on the ground that it assigned too dignified and lofty a position to this dwelling place" (102).
 58. Ibid., 117.
 59. Ibid., 118.
 60. Cited by Lovejoy, *ibid.*, from Bruno's *De l'infinito universo e mondi*, I:314.
 61. Spink devotes a chapter to him in his (1960), 48–66. The English translation of his fable is cited earlier at note 30.
 62. Descartes, *Principles*, Pt III: Art 57, CSM, I:266.
 63. Ibid, Pt. III: Art 29, CSM, I:253.
 64. Leibniz, "On Freedom," PE, 95.
 65. Ibid., 67.
 66. Leibniz, "My Principle is ..." 12 December 1676 in DSR 103.
 67. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origins of Evil* (1985), Section 8, 128. I am obliged to David Blumenfeld for bringing this paragraph to my attention.
 68. Leibniz, *New Essays*, 472–3.
 69. Ibid. Daniel Dennett (1996) suggests that creatures such as flying horses are logically and even physically possible, but not biologically or historically possible (105). Leibnizian compossibility, sufficient for actual existence, seems to require

something like physical possibility, intermediate between biological and logical possibility.

70. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, 134.
71. "It is my view that all true entities or minds, which alone are one, always increase in perfection; . . . that at some time or other all the globes of the world will communicate with each other; that minds, once they are brought into this theatre, advance more and more" (Leibniz, "On Truths, the Mind, God and the Universe," 15 April 1676 in DSR 61).
72. In a letter to Bourguet, Leibniz says, "I do not agree that in order to know if the romance of *Astrea* is possible, it is necessary to know its connections with the rest of the universe. It would indeed be necessary to know this if it is to be *compossible* with the universe, and as a consequence to know if this romance has taken place, is taking place or will take place in some corner of the world, for surely there would be no place for it without such connections. And it is very true that what is not, never has been, and never will be is not possible, if we take the *possible* in the sense of the *compossible*, as I have just said" (Letter to Louis Bourguet, December 1714, in *Philosophical Papers*, 661, tr. slightly altered).
73. If one imagines creatures of another world, which is infinitely small, we would be infinite in comparison with them. From which it is evident that we, conversely, can be imagined to be infinitely small in comparison with the inhabitants of another world, which is of infinite magnitude and yet is limited (Leibniz, "Secrets of the sublime," in DSR 27). Cf. Leibniz, "On freedom," 1689(?) in PE 95.
74. Leibniz, Letter to Arnould, Oct 9 1687, in *Philosophical Papers* 347; G II: 128.
75. Cyrano de Bergerac, *Other Worlds*, 75.
76. Letter to Remond, July 14, 1714, *Philosophical Papers*, 657.
77. Letter to Remond, January 10, 1714, *Philosophical Papers*, 655.
78. *New Essays*, 166.
79. *New Essays*, 56.
80. *New Essays*, 194f. Pleasure is dignified by being described as "fundamentally . . . a sense of perfection." Ibid. An interesting passage, amongst those collected by Donald Rutherford for his study of Leibniz's reception of Stoicism (this volume, Chapter 4, Section III), refers to "the perception of pleasure in [oneself] and in the powers of [one's] mind." The gradual acceptance of pleasure as relevant to aesthetic and ethical norms needs further study.
81. Leibniz's heterodox views on eternal damnation were studied assiduously by the liberal theologian G.W. Lessing.

Stoics, Grotius, and Spinoza on Moral Deliberation

Jon Miller

The concept of a philosophical legacy is figurative. A literal legacy involves the transfer of tangible goods (and perhaps intangible ones, such as peer-ages) from one generation to another. Like literal legacies, philosophical legacies also involve the transfer of goods between generations. But unlike literal legacies, the goods being transferred in philosophical legacies are ideas, arguments, systems, or other such philosophical entities. This difference in a philosophical versus literal legacy is important, and complicates considerably the correct use of the notion of philosophical legacy itself. Because philosophical legacies consist in ideas, arguments, and so forth, those “inheriting” them must necessarily engage in acts of interpretation. Because philosophical legacies necessarily involve interpretation, they are not fixed: what the legacy or bequest actually means or amounts to depends, to a greater or lesser extent, on the person receiving it. This is not necessarily the case with literal legacies, in which the inheritors can receive their inheritance without any effort (intellectual or otherwise) on their part.

I begin with these comments because the Stoics’ theory of the natural law has long been regarded as one of their most lasting and influential legacies.¹ This is arguably true, but depending on how the notion of the legacy itself is understood, there is a real risk of simplifying and distorting the interactions that occurred between the Stoics and their successors. The Stoics may have bequeathed something we call “natural law theory” to posterity, but it doesn’t follow that there was one set of fixed and immutable principles that all of their heirs had to adopt. As is the case with all philosophical legacies, the Stoics’ legatees struggled to make sense of their inheritance, modified it where necessary, and incorporated it into larger ethical and philosophical systems that may or may not have been Stoical. In addition to these efforts (which are required of all beneficiaries of philosophical legacies), the Stoics’ legatees also had to deal with special complications presented by the natural law theory itself: rather than determining a single correct interpretation, it

seems to allow (at least, in its transmitted form) for numerous different and sometimes incompatible readings.

In this chapter, I am interested in the Stoic natural law legacy to the early moderns. In an attempt to reduce the topic to a manageable size, I have focused on what natural laws are good for. Now, natural laws are supposed to be good for many things; the particular use that interests me is their place in our moral deliberation. By “moral deliberation” I mean figuring out what to do in circumstances that are both ambiguous (where the correct response or understanding is unclear) and non-trivial (where something of genuine ethical significance hangs on the outcome). It is beyond doubt that the Stoics thought that natural laws contribute crucially to our moral deliberation; at the same time, it is hard to say what exactly Stoics took these contributions to be. Because Stoics made natural laws central to moral deliberation, the connection between moral deliberation and natural laws is an aspect of the legacy of their theory. But because it is uncertain how exactly laws contributed to moral deliberation, the place of laws in the Stoics’ natural law legacy is also unclear. Anyone who accepts the Stoic natural law legacy will thus also be committed to the idea that moral deliberation is somehow bound up with natural laws; at the same time, she will have to work out for herself how exactly moral deliberation draws upon the laws.

In the first section of the chapter, I present two competing contemporary interpretations of the Stoics on natural laws and moral deliberation. This will indicate the nature of the problem and range of possible or at least feasible interpretations. Then, in the next two sections, I show how two early moderns, Grotius and Spinoza, conceived of the issue. If I am successful, by the conclusion I will have demonstrated both the general complexity of the Stoic “legacy” of natural laws as well as the particular views of Stoics, Grotius, and Spinoza on moral deliberation.

I. Stoics²

Let me begin, then, with the two competing interpretations of ancient Stoicism on natural laws and moral deliberation, starting with what they agree on.

The Stoic universe is rational, and it is One. Everything is unified and structured by omnipresent *Logos* or Reason, which has providentially arranged things for the good of all, especially those things that share in its *logos* or rationality. Although we are not born into *logos*, we have the potential to become rational, and if we develop naturally and healthfully, we will realize this potential. Once we are rational, we attain new ends for ourselves; whereas before our end was mere self-preservation, now we are to seek the cultivation of our rationality. Nature provides this end for us, which we are lucky to have, because by virtue of it we are able to seek a good immeasurably more valuable than other so-called goods – virtue – and with it, true

happiness. Nature does something else for us besides: it provides us with the means to realize this end. It does this by giving us the natural law, which can be conceived as a set of directions provided by *Logos* for human beings about how to be good, and hence happy.³ Because we are rational, we are subject to the natural law's strictures; if we want to be happy, we ought to obey it.

So far, so good. The contentious issues emerge only when we get to the specifics of natural law theory. Here, two problems in particular divide commentators: first, about the precise way in which laws feature in moral deliberation; second, about the proper characterization of the laws themselves.

One camp, which I will call the "generalists" (members include Julia Annas, Phillip Mitsis, and Gisela Striker⁴), holds the following. Of the many possible ways that the laws could feature in moral deliberation, Stoics favored a *deductive* model. In Striker's words,

It has often been thought that all the Stoics had to say about the content of nature's laws was that it prescribes for human beings to be guided by reason . . . In fact, I think the Stoics, or at any rate Chrysippus, had a better answer. Having established – let us assume – that goodness consists in the rational order of nature, they proceeded to deduce the content of nature's laws for human beings from observation of the apparent purposes nature had followed in making man the kind of creature that he is.⁵

Mitsis clearly states the way in which moral deliberation is supposed to work in such a framework: "we make," Mitsis writes, "judgments and attempt to justify them by deciding the extent to which a general moral law or principle applies to our particular case."⁶ For moral laws to serve this role in our moral deliberation, they must have certain properties: they must include all humans (and possibly all rational beings) in their scope; they must be endowed with enough content to provide guidance to those who seek it; and they must not be violable, except in some very specific and controlled ways. We can summarize this by saying that laws must be universal, substantive, and exceptionless.⁷ The picture so far, then, is this: there are laws in nature that have prescriptive force; these laws shape our moral deliberation by providing us with the general principles and concepts from which we can extract particular moral thoughts; to execute this task, the laws must be rich in substance and must govern all people without exception.

Now I should introduce a complication in Stoic theory with which both camps must grapple, one stemming from the division of moral agents into two kinds: those who are not virtuous (the fools) and those who are (sages). These two agents have different relationships to the laws: for example, whereas fools are prohibited by the natural law from committing incest, sages are allowed to do so in special circumstances; likewise for cannibalism (forbidden for fools, not for sages), suicide, and other types of action⁸. To capture the different relationships fools and sages have to moral laws,

generalists modify the *exceptionlessness* requirement: instead of being truly exceptionless, the laws are exceptionless for fools (which is almost everyone) and admitting of exceptions for sages. Generalists argue that when an exception is to be made to a lower-order law, appeal must be made to a higher-order law. So, for example, *normally* the sage is enjoined by the natural law from eating people (fortunately for his friends); but in special circumstances, a higher-order law will override the lower one, thereby exempting the sage from it and obliging him to act instead along the lines suggested by the higher-order law. With this proviso in mind, generalists think they have captured the essence of the Stoic view of moral deliberation. And that view is wonderfully simple: in Mitsis' words, "the Stoics think that our moral lives are structured by moral rules at every level"⁹; as Annas puts it, "Virtue is structured by principles and rules, and does not depend at any point on non-rule-governed insight."¹⁰

Would that it were so, the other camp might reply. This camp, which I will call "particularists" (they include Brad Inwood, A.A. Long, and Paul Vander Waerdt¹¹), objects that generalists err on at least two crucial counts. First, they think that generalists misconstrue the logical or conceptual character of Stoic laws. Although it *may* be possible to find laws endowed with one or two of these properties, there are few or no texts (especially from the early Stoa) in which laws are said to be universal, exceptionless, and substantive at all once. Usually, when a "law" is universal and exceptionless, it fails the substance requirement, and when a "law" passes muster for substance, it is not universal and exceptionless.¹² Instead of thinking of laws in these terms, particularists might be said to prefer a model more akin to the "rough laws" connecting the physical and the mental in Davidson's anomalous monism. The logical form of Davidson's rough laws is something like this: other things being equal, if a human is in physical state *x*, then she will also be in mental state *y*.¹³ The roughness enters through the *ceteris paribus* clause: it signals that there is an indefinite range of circumstances capable of severing the general link between antecedent and consequent. Likewise, particularists argue that Stoic "laws" are always prefaced by a *ceteris paribus* clause, which allows agents to act otherwise, in special (unforeseeable) circumstances.

Connected with this objection is the particularists' worry about whether moral deliberation is deductive or not. Given what they think of as the true logical or conceptual character of a Stoic natural law, it is not possible to deduce, strictly speaking, a conclusion or course of action from a law. This is because the law is a conditional, the antecedent of which contains an indefinitely long condition that, because it is indefinite, can never be proven true. Instead of *deducing* courses of action or modes of evaluation from laws, particularists think that Stoic laws are meant to be heuristic devices, guides to thought and action that, together with information about individual circumstances, enable the agent to determine what ought to be thought or

done. As Inwood puts it, the agent's moral deliberation is "situationally sensitive" and occurs "within a framework of a general rule that is defeasible but at least partly entrenched."¹⁴ Particularists do not necessarily quarrel with generalists over the class of actions prescribed or prohibited by the natural law; they are willing to grant that fools are prohibited from committing suicide and cannibalism, whereas sages are not. But they think this misplaces the proper emphasis of natural law theory. In Long's words, it would be "a travesty of the Stoics' deeper moral intuitions" to say that "the wise man's virtue is reducible to the application of moral rules, as set out in lists of *kathêkonta*."¹⁵ The reason that emphasis is misplaced, Vander Waerdt explains, is that "natural law prescribes the intensional rather than the extensional characteristics of virtuous actions."¹⁶ According to particularists, the ancient Stoic theory of natural laws is to be construed less as law-like than as dispositional: it offers not a fixed set of rules and class of actions that one must live by but rather a group of guidelines that are supposed to help one develop the necessary rational attitude one must possess if one's actions are to be moral.¹⁷

II. Grotius

Modern commentators have thus painted two very different pictures of how ancient Stoics conceived of moral deliberation. I will not try to adjudicate the debate here.¹⁸ Instead, I want to proceed directly to the early modern period and show how two key figures took up the issue.

I will start with Grotius, but first it might make sense to explain his relevance to my theme. Grotius (1583–1645) was a brilliant auto-didactic who loved to show off his learning by frequently citing texts, ancient and modern, in support of his arguments. While his pedantic style occasionally makes for tedious reading, it also provides us with a relatively rare (at least, for his day) opportunity to learn what texts were thought in the early modern period to be Stoic, and why. Given Grotius' status as a prominent and respected intellectual,¹⁹ it stands to reason that his views generally would have been influential. I think this is true when it comes to Stoicism in particular: although I cannot argue the point here, I think that Grotius' interpretation of Stoicism became one of the standard interpretations by the end of the seventeenth century, so that anyone who was interested in Stoicism would have had to contend with his reading of it.²⁰

In the opening lines of Book I of *De iure belli et pacis* (henceforth: *De iure*), Grotius states that his "subject . . . is, Rights by nature . . ."²¹ Important groundwork for his investigation into this subject, however, has been laid in the "Prolegomena" to *De iure*. Observing that "a discussion of right [*de iure*] is worthless, if there is no right" (Prolegomena, §5), Grotius opens the Prolegomena with a defense of the very existence of right. The person he chooses as advocate for the proposition that there is no right is, interestingly, that

arch-enemy of Stoicism, Carneades.²² He places these words into Carneades' mouth:

People had established rights for themselves for the sake of utility, varying them according to their customs, even changing them often in the same society as time passed. Natural Law [*ius*], however, there is none: for all creatures, both human and animals alike, are led by nature to seek their own gratification; and so, either there is no natural justice, or if there is, it is the highest folly, since it does harm to itself in aiming at the good of others. (Prolegomena, §5)

There seem to be two lines of attack here. First, there is the *positive* account of rights according to which what is right is what is useful. Since what is useful can change from one society to the next, and even within the same society from one time to another, it can also happen that what counts as right might change. This is obviously a relativistic conception of rights, where the thing to which rights are related is either a certain cultural group or a certain time-period. The second line of attack is *negative*, calling into doubt the very existence of natural law. This criticism is based on the assumption of an opposition between self-interest – between seeking “one’s own gratification” – and natural law. Given that “all creatures” are naturally motivated by self-interest, it follows either that natural law is an empty concept – “a mere Chimera,” as one English translator renders this line²³ – or that it is absurd, since it promotes the welfare of others at the expense of oneself.

Notice that the skepticism is not epistemological: it does *not* allege that we cannot *know* the Natural Law; it makes the stronger claim that there is no such thing as Natural Law as a body of right that is independent of time and place. Given Grotius’ overarching concern – the explication and defense of a Law among nations – this makes sense. Of all the types of moral laws his readers were apt to doubt, the Law among nations must top the list. If it is anywhere, it is between nations that moral anarchy exists: at best, might makes right; at worst, there is no right, and one nation can do what it will to another. Now, it may have been possible for Grotius to address this kind of skepticism (that is, skepticism about a Law among nations) without dealing with the other (that is, skepticism about a Natural Law). If it can be proven that no Natural Law exists, however, then on the assumption that the Law among nations is parasitic upon Natural Law, it would follow that there is no Law of that kind, either. By addressing deep skepticism about the general Natural Law, Grotius is taking on more than is strictly necessary for his purposes. But he will have achieved so much more if he succeeds in refuting it.

Let us concentrate on what I have called the negative line of attack. Although belief in an opposition between self-interest and natural law or right is widespread, there is no logical or conceptual reason why this must be so. For example, one might define natural law in such a way that the pursuit of one’s own interest is the right thing to do. One might argue

that since both self-interest and natural law are natural, it cannot be the case that they are opposed, because that would require two related natural phenomena to be incompatible, and nature does not work that way. This argument would be considerably strengthened by forceful exposition of the notions of natural law and self-interest, especially an exposition concluding in a demonstration of their compatibility. Such is the tack Grotius chooses.

He agrees with Carneades over the universality and primacy of the self-preservation instinct that forms the core and basis of self-interest. He writes in *De iure praedae commentarius* (henceforth: *De iure praedae*), “that love, whose primary force and action are directed to self-interest, is the first principle of the whole natural order.”²⁴ In a thoroughly Stoic formulation²⁵ of the same idea in *De iure*, he says, “The first business of each is to preserve himself in the state of nature; the next, to retain what is according to nature, and to reject what is contrary to it” (Book I, Chap. 2, §1.1). Though they agree over its universality and primacy, Grotius argues that Carneades misunderstands the true nature and implications of the principle of self-preservation. Grotius thinks that far from being mutually exclusive, self-preservation entails Natural Law. To see why this is so, Grotius proposes to examine “what agrees with that first principle of Self-preservation,” because this will show “what agrees with Natural Law” (*De iure*, Book I, Chap. 2, §1.2). What is it, then, that agrees with self-preservation? What follows from the fact that humans are creatures whose first concern is always their own preservation?

At least two things, Grotius thinks. First, they will always seek to shield themselves against threats to life and limb; second, they will always seek the material means necessary for life. That is to say, in order to satisfy the self-preservation impulse, humans (and other animals) will always endeavor to protect themselves against acts of violence and to accumulate the goods that life requires. These are universal, timeless truths, Grotius insists, and they follow directly from the principle of self-preservation: if one is a self-preserving being, one will act in (at least) these two ways. Because they are universal and timeless, Carneades is wrong when he maintains that only relative truths are compatible with self-preservation. It may be the case that self-preservation has more transitory consequences, that it leads people in one society at one time to act differently from people in another society or at another time. But it also has permanent effects; it also leads humans (and other animals) to defend themselves against bodily harm and to seek the food, shelter, money, and so on needed to live.

Given Grotius’ Stoic outlook, it is only a small (if revolutionary²⁶) step to secure these actions in a moral theory. Being universal, primary, and natural actions – being the actions of all self-preservers, which is what humans (and other creatures) are – it must be right for humans to act in these ways. This is because natural acts accord with the Law of those who undertake them, and

any act in accord with the Law of those who undertake them “has in it a . . . moral necessity; and consequently . . . is commanded by God, the author of nature” (*De iure*, Book I, Chap. 1, §10.1). To secure this right, Grotius formulates the two fundamental Laws of Nature: “It shall be permissible to defend [one’s own] life and to shun that which threatens to prove injurious” and “It shall be permissible to acquire for oneself, and to retain, those things which are useful for life.”²⁷ Notice that there is no categorical prohibition against violence of all kinds; as he says, “in the first principle of nature, there is nothing which is repugnant to war” (*De iure*, Book I, Chap. 2, §1.4). Rather, only *antisocial* violence is forbidden, where antisocial is defined as that which violates either of the two basic laws. Because not all violence is incompatible with Nature’s Laws, it is possible for there to be such a thing as a just war, and it is possible to have a discussion about the law of war (*De iure*, Book I, Chap. 2, §2.1).

So far, Grotius’ laws have a rather limited application; they place few restrictions on which actions would count as right actions. For example, it would seem that attacking my neighbor for the sake of accumulating more goods for myself – even goods above and beyond those that are strictly required for life – is compatible with the laws, and so it would seem that such an attack count as right. This surely conflicts with our moral intuitions, and so it seems to count as a strike against Grotius’ moral theory. To deal with such problems, Grotius expands on the notion of self-preservation to show that humans are naturally social.²⁸ First, he contends that “in other animals, as well as in man, their desire of their own individual good is tempered by a regard, partly for their offspring, partly for others of their own species” (Prolegomena, §7). It is not the case that self-interest necessarily entails actions centered exclusively on the self. Even though one might be motivated by self-interest, one can still seek to benefit others. This is clearest with respect to the attention parents lavish on their children. *Perhaps* all of their love and effort is ultimately driven by pure self-interest; nonetheless, it seems quite true that the children are better off for it. Second, he thinks that Carneades errs in grouping humans with all other animals. “For man,” he argues, “is indeed an animal, but an animal of an excellent kind, differing much more from all other animals than they differ among themselves” (Prolegomena, §6). There are many properties unique to humans,²⁹ the most important of which is the “desire the Stoics called *oikeiōsis*” (Prolegomena, §6). As evidence of the existence of this “desire for society,” Grotius cites the behavior “of infants, in which, prior to all teaching, we see a certain disposition to do good to others” (Prolegomena, §7). Because humans are essentially social creatures, Grotius argues, they serve their own self-interest by tending “the conservation of society” (Prolegomena, §8).

Proving that humans are naturally social creatures is important to the argument because Grotius hopes to extract from human nature certain truths naturally applicable to humans. He writes in a much-discussed passage, “the

Mother of Right, that is, of Natural Law, is Human Nature; for this would lead us to desire mutual society, even if it were not required for the supply of other wants" (Prolegomena, §16).³⁰ Since human nature is such that humans naturally require human companionship, humans are obliged to treat each other in certain ways; in particular, humans must treat each other in ways conducive to the maintenance of society.³¹ Two of these ways are elevated above the rest, and become an additional pair of Laws of Nature: "Let no one inflict injury upon his fellow" and "Let no one seize possession of that which has been taken into the possession of another."³² These laws will eliminate simple counterexamples of the sort dreamed up earlier (it is no longer permissible for me to assault you for the sake of obtaining goods I don't need) while simultaneously leaving open the possibility of justified or justifiable violence.

With that, I complete my sketch – the barest sketch – of Grotius' response to the skeptic and the basic way in which his larger argument proceeds. Let me hang some points on this framework pertinent to the main thrust of this chapter. It will be easier to see what these points are by taking notice of the basic character of Grotius' laws: they are simultaneously very broad, binding, and concrete. Let me explain.

In order to meet the skeptical challenge, it was important for Grotius to identify and utilize as the basis for his ethics principles that were not in fact bound to a particular time or place. Since he was not obliged to refute the moral nihilist (one who denied the existence of *any* moral principles) but only the moral skeptic (who denied that there are no non-relative moral principles), Grotius could hope for success by presenting actual examples of principles that all people did in fact accept. Such a standard made it necessary for him to formulate principles of a suitably broad kind, so that it would be impossible to object that any person or society did not in fact accept them.³³ Thus, the breadth of Grotius' laws is no accident; it is an indispensable feature.

At the same time, Grotius' laws are binding – they hold for all agents within their scope – but for one circumstance. Acknowledging the possibility that laws may lead to opposing conclusions, Grotius says that when such dilemmas arise, recourse should be made to the more fundamental law. He writes,

All of these precepts are of a general and necessary character, save that they are naturally and implicitly subject to one exception: that is to say, whenever a case arises in which the laws appear to conflict with one another – a situation described by the rhetoricians as *tên kata peristasin machên*, 'a conflict produced by the circumstances' – the principle embodied in the superior law is upheld, and the inferior law is set aside.³⁴

Here again, we find close affinity to the generalist reading of ancient Stoicism, which modifies the "exceptionlessness" of the laws by providing for appeal to a higher-order law. This appeal will not continue indefinitely, for

we will eventually find a law that will cover our circumstances and provide us with the necessary guidance.

Finally, Grotius' laws are not completely abstract; they have implications for the actions of human agents, and it is not too difficult to determine what those implications are. As my simple example shows, the person who is considering attacking his neighbor in order to gain possession of goods that he did not need would find, if he stopped to reflect on it, that such an action is morally impermissible. It may be the case that any particular moral agent who wishes to consult these laws would find them removed from the situation in which he is placed. If so, he would be obliged to conduct a more-or-less elaborate series of deductions, beginning with the universal laws and proceeding slowly to laws with increasingly smaller scope. To the extent that this is so, it seems that once again, Grotius' model of moral deliberation resembles the generalist interpretation of Stoicism.

Thus, Grotius' laws have basically the same three intensional properties as the generalist version of ancient Stoicism: in both cases, laws are (among other things) universal, exceptionless, and substantive. For this reason alone, then, I think of Grotius as advancing a conception of moral deliberation that is, for all intents and purposes, the same as the conception that the generalists see in ancient Stoicism.

Some other considerations reinforce this conclusion. For example, Grotius' laws – especially the most fundamental ones – are essentially universally quantified statements that take concrete particulars as values for their variables. (Thus, the law “It shall be permissible to defend one's own life and to shun that which threatens to prove injurious” can be interpreted as, “For any x , if x 's life is threatened, x is permitted to defend his own life.”) In addition, Grotian agents consult the laws in much the way that generalists believe Stoics would have done: they always make the laws their guides to moral deliberation. If it were that case that the laws were quantified statements but that they were irrelevant to morality, then possibly Grotius could be reconciled with Stoics *qua* particularists. But this is not the case; the laws bear directly upon ethics. This is evident from such passages as the beginning of *De iure*, Book I, Chapter 2, where Grotius offers a veritable catalogue of ways in which the Natural Law “directs” or “dictates” acts by individual agents. Such texts make it apparent that with sufficient time and computational ability, anyone could deduce the morally correct actions from the laws in precisely the same way that generalists think happens in Stoicism.

The similarity of Grotius' conception to the generalist reading of the Stoics' leads to the final point I want to make in this section. Most of the time, when comparing two figures in the history of philosophy, it is hard to say that one “influenced” the other. This is because of both a paucity of evidence as well as the complexity of the notion of influence itself. On the issue of moral deliberation, however, I think it fair to say that Grotius was probably influenced by the Stoics. There are two related reasons for this.

First, we have fairly substantial textual and conceptual evidence of influence, since Grotius knew Stoicism extremely well and formulated a conception of moral deliberation almost isomorphic to what some contemporary scholars believe was held by the Stoics. And second, since the body of evidence is fairly substantial and points to an almost direct translation of a Stoic view into Grotius' moral theory, we are not dealing with a tangential case of influence but one that lies near the core. As a result, no matter how one parses or defines "influence," I think that anyone who has the notion of influence and who studied the Stoics and Grotius would conclude that the latter was influenced by the former.

III. Spinoza

There are two main stages to my discussion of Spinoza. After briefly mentioning some of the numerous ways in which his ethics draws upon natural laws, I will sketch his theory of moral deliberation in particular. Then I will discuss the moral deliberation of the *sapiens*, or wise person, which differs in an important respect from that of ordinary individuals.

III.1

Let me begin with some of the ways in which Spinoza's ethics draws upon natural laws.³⁵ First, laws are among the varied conceptual apparatus he uses to define key ethical terms. For example, he writes in the *Tractatus Politicus* (henceforth: *TP*), "man can ... be called free, ... only in so far as he preserves the power of existing and operating according to the laws of human nature [*humanae naturae leges*]." ³⁶ And slightly later in the same work: "what our reason pronounces bad, is not bad as regards the order and laws of universal nature, but only as regards the laws of our own nature taken separately [*sed tantum solius nostrae naturae legum respectu*]" (Chapter II, Section 8). Again, he says in IVP18S of the *Ethics* that "virtue (by D8) is nothing but acting from the laws of one's own nature ..." ³⁷ In these texts, the important concepts of "freedom," "badness," and "virtue" are defined by reference to the laws: one is free only if one remains within the limits placed on oneself by the laws of human nature; something is bad only in relation to the laws of our nature and not the laws of Nature as a whole; and one acts virtuously by acting in accordance with the laws of one's nature.

Next, Spinoza unambiguously ties explanation to laws. He writes in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (henceforth: *TTP*), "Now in examining natural phenomena we first of all try to discover those features that are most universal and common to the whole of Nature, to wit, motion-and-rest and the laws and rules governing them which Nature always observes and through which she constantly acts; and then we advance gradually from these to other less universal features."³⁸ This conception of explanation is similar

to the “deductive-nomological” model much discussed in twentieth-century philosophy of science, and according to which a phenomenon is explained when it is deduced from the relevant laws plus an initial state of affairs.³⁹ One should not be misled by the phrase “natural phenomena” into thinking that this method of explanation applies only to what *we* consider “scientific” matters: given Spinoza’s radical naturalism, he would not hesitate to apply the same method non-moral and moral phenomena alike, since they are all equally natural.

Third, and finally, Spinoza connects moral action itself to natural laws. In various places, he states that humans must conform to and act in accordance with the natural laws (see, for example, IVAppVI). Now, action in accordance with nature’s laws is equivalent to, or a synonym for, action in accordance with nature (see, for example, *TTP* Chapter XVI, *Ethics* III Pref). Further, action in accordance with nature is rational action (IVP35). Since rational action is moral action (IVAppIV), action in accordance with nature’s laws is moral action. As Spinoza writes in the *TTP*, “he who renders to each his own through awareness of the true principle of law and its necessity, is acting steadfastly and at his own will, not another’s, and so he is rightly termed a just man.”⁴⁰

As these and other texts show, Spinoza’s ethics are infused in a variety of ways by natural laws. My claim is that the same is true of the account he gives of *rational* deliberations.⁴¹ Of the various pieces of textual evidence that can be offered in support of this interpretation, the clearest and most compelling, I think, are those like the methodological comment from the *TTP* just quoted, where Spinoza states that investigation and deliberation proceed correctly by inference from “the laws and rules governing” things.⁴² The ultimate justification Spinoza would provide for such a method, I think, is that it offers an excellent way to gain insight into the nature of things, and it does this because the natures of things are arranged in the way that the method portrays them as being – that is, as law-like. If natures (both Nature as a whole and individual natures) are fundamentally law-like, then since in Spinozism we are enjoined to live in accordance with nature, we are enjoined to live in a law-like manner. What this means, I suggest, is that we should seek to ensure that our actions conform to the laws governing them. To realize this objective, we should consult the laws relevant to our situations and ascertain their implications for us.

The nature of the deduction may vary according to whether the action is prescribed or prohibited. If the former, then the agent must determine whether a possible action is an instance of a type of action enjoined by the laws; if it is, then he or she must undertake that action. For example, if the moral laws require one to uphold the laws of the state (as Spinoza says in *TP* Chapter III, Section 6⁴³), then one ought to perform the action that upholds the state’s laws. On the other hand, in the case of prohibited actions, one must strive to ensure that one does not instantiate such tokens in one’s own

actions. For instance, if the moral law prohibits lying, then one conforms to this law by not instantiating any actions within its scope (see IVP72S). Regardless of whether the action is prescribed or prohibited, however, moral deliberation always consists of bringing particular cases under general rules, drawing the necessary inferences, and deciding which among them is best from a moral point of view.

Thus far I have been discussing action-oriented moral deliberation. But there is another kind of moral deliberation, one that is not designed to issue in actions but is aimed at discovering the laws that will form the basis of action-oriented deliberation. What is the character of such second-order moral deliberation? Here, the nesting of laws becomes important.⁴⁴ One might be convinced that one's actions ought to conform to one's nature, and that to achieve this ideal one must act in accordance with the laws of one's nature. But there are laws of the laws of one's nature, and they set further morally significant constraints on one's action. Although one may need to refer to such laws in order to determine which practices (such as promising or punishing⁴⁵) are ethically suitable, the search for laws is not endless; eventually, if one wishes to pursue this investigation, one will discover the most basic laws on which all other laws are founded – the laws of *Deus sive natura*. No matter how far back one goes, however, one will be looking for laws to determine one's moral outlook and practices.

That last point is important: as one moves from laws with narrower extensions to laws with broader ones, the content of the laws one is examining becomes increasingly more general. Since the content determines the character of one's deliberations, one's deliberations become more general as the content becomes more general. This generality may allow a certain amount of latitude to the deliberator, in the sense that it is possible to draw a larger number of inferences on a wider range of topics from general laws than it is from specific ones. Nevertheless, this latitude is still law-like, since the role of laws in general deliberation is conceptually identical to that of laws in specific deliberation. Whether one is consulting specific laws because one's deliberations concern first-order ethical problems, or one is consulting general laws because one's deliberations are about second-order questions, one is attempting to determine what the laws imply for the matter at hand. Thus, with the generality that necessarily attends second-order moral deliberations does not come any flexibility: one's deliberations are just as rigidly structured by laws and their implications.

Let me reinforce this thought, and conclude this sub-section, with an excerpt from the *TTP*:

However, since the true purpose of law is usually apparent only to the few and is generally incomprehensible by the great majority in whose lives reason plays little part, in order to constrain all men alike legislators have wisely devised another motive

for obedience, far different from that which is necessarily entailed by the nature of law. For those who uphold the law they promised what most appeals to the masses, while threatening transgressors with dire retribution . . . he who renders to each his own through fear of the gallows is constrained in his action by [another] . . . and cannot be called a just man. But he who renders to each his own through awareness of the true principle of law and its necessity, is acting steadfastly and at his own will, not another's, and so he is rightly termed a just man.⁴⁶

The Kantian characterization of moral actions as those actions that are undertaken solely out of respect for the law, without regard for the potential consequences of the action, is interesting, and partially undermines the view that Spinoza's ethics is totally opposed to Kant's.⁴⁷ But that's another story; for our purposes, the important point is that Spinoza says "reason plays little part" in the lives of "the great majority." In opposition to the "great majority" is the "just man." If reason plays little part in the lives of the great majority, and the great majority is opposed to the just man, it seems to follow that reason plays a large part in the life of the just man. Thus, the just man is the rational man. Now, the just man acts "through awareness of the true principle of law and its necessity." The just man is the rational man, and the just man is he who acts through awareness of the law, so the rational man is the man who acts through awareness of the law. That is, the rationality of the just man is cashed out in terms of conformity with the law (presumably, given the context of this passage in the *TTP*, both natural and non-natural or human laws). What it means for someone to be just – to be acting morally – is for him to be acting lawfully. Thus we find Spinoza to be maintaining here that moral deliberation is structured by and in terms of laws. As he says elsewhere, "the words 'law' and 'wrong-doing' often refer not merely to the laws of a commonwealth, but also to the general rules which concern all natural things, and especially to the general rules of reason . . ." (*TP*, Chapter IV, Section 4). Put in the epistemological language of the *Ethics*, the person who knows rightly "knows that all things follow from the necessity of the divine nature, and happen according to the eternal laws and rules of nature . . ." (IVP5oS).

Thus it could be said that Spinoza's views on moral deliberation are reductionist in form and tendency. There is only one way to deliberate morally – by considering what nature's laws are and what they imply for one's situation.

III.2

But are things so simple? It might be argued that the deliberation of the ideal moral agent, the *sapiens*, differs conceptually from the deliberation of the ordinary human. Rather than *reasoning* his way through moral quandaries, the *sapiens* immediately intuits or perceives the relevant moral issues. Because the *sapiens* deliberates in one way and ordinary humans deliberate in another, it is not true that Spinoza presents a fundamentally unified theory

of moral deliberation. There may be only one way to *reason* morally; but there is another kind of deliberation that is intuitive and non-rational and is irreducible to rational deliberation.

This argument has merit, but it needs two qualifications. First, and most importantly, there is the problem of the obscurity of “intuition.” Spinoza introduces intuition or (as he calls it) “intuitive knowledge” (*scientia intuitiva*) in IIP4oS2 as one of three modes of knowledge (the other two being opinion or imagination and reason). There he writes, “this kind of knowing [viz., *scientia intuitiva*] proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things.” To clarify the differences among the three modes of knowledge, Spinoza uses the so-called problem of the fourth proportional. Suppose one is given three numbers and asked “to find a fourth which is to the third as the second is to the first.”⁴⁸ Spinoza thinks there are three basic ways of solving this problem: mimicking a technique that one has learned or been taught without really understanding the validity of the technique; applying one’s understanding of the common properties of proportionals to the specific numbers of the problem; and seeing “in one glance” (*uno intuitu*) the ratio of the first number to the second and inferring the fourth (IIP4oS2). The first solution is formed from opinion or imagination, the second from reason, and the third from intuition. While reason and intuition are clearly preferable to opinion or imagination, all of them can provide means to the answer, and so all of them can be counted as genuine modes of knowledge.

The problem of the fourth proportional is only an imperfect illustration of the three modes of knowledge, but still we can draw some conclusions from it about the nature of intuition. First, and somewhat contentiously, intuition is *not* distinguished from reason by being non-inferential. In the problem of the fourth proportional itself, Spinoza says that when we know a proposition intuitively, we “infer” (*concludimus*) that proposition. The inferential character of *scientia intuitiva* is supported by subsequent references to such knowledge. For example, Spinoza says in IIP47S, “since all things are in God and are conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately [*sequitur, nos ex cognitione hac plurima posse deducere, quae adaequate cognoscamus*], and so can form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in P4oS2 . . .” As others have pointed out,⁴⁹ the steps we take to know propositions intuitively may be shorter and fewer than the steps we take to know propositions rationally, but they are steps nonetheless.

A second conclusion is less contentious but also less concrete. Intuition proceeds from particulars to particulars, and in this respect differs from reason, which moves general or universal propositions to their instantiations. In the Dutch version of IIP4oS2, Spinoza says that to solve the problem of the fourth proportion intuitively, “We have to think just of the specific

ratio of the first two numbers, not of the universal property of proportional numbers.” Those who solve the problem of the fourth proportional intuitively are able to do so directly on the basis of their knowledge of the three numbers given them; they do not have to reflect on the properties of numbers and proportionals in general and apply the results of these reflections to the problem before them. When Spinoza refers to intuitive knowledge late in the *Ethics*, he stresses that it is knowledge of particulars. VP25Dem states, “The third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things . . .” While the origins of intuitive knowledge may lie in adequate ideas of God’s attributes,⁵⁰ the knowledge itself concerns the essence of things – individual things.

This leads to a third conclusion: intuition is supposed to consist in a direct insight into the essences of things and their relation to God. “Essence” here should not be construed in terms of properties since, as I have said, reason (and *not* intuition) is knowledge of properties. Instead, it should be understood in terms of *conatus*, Spinoza’s all-important doctrine that “Each thing, as far as it can by its own power [*quantum in se est*], strives to persevere in its being” (IIP6). This striving to persevere in existence is “the actual essence of the thing” (IIP7). When we know essences, so understood, by the third mode of knowledge, we know them in two ways: first, directly and without mediation; second, in relation to God. In Margaret Wilson’s words (and I am following her interpretation here), the third kind of knowledge “is (at least in part) our coming to grasp intuitively the ‘force to persevere in existence’ that defines the essence of singular things as a manifestation and consequence of God’s power.”⁵¹

These three conclusions provide some indication of Spinoza’s notion of intuition. It must be admitted, however, that many questions still remain, questions that even the best Spinoza scholars leave unanswered.⁵² If Spinoza’s notion of intuition ultimately leaves us disappointed, it might be said in his defense that he is not alone in struggling to explain precisely and completely what this faculty is supposed to be. The issue has resurfaced in contemporary epistemology, as philosophers have returned in recent years to the idea that we can obtain knowledge via a faculty akin to Spinoza’s intuition. Compare, for example, what we have read of *scientia intuitiva* to this passage from Laurence Bonjour:

when I carefully and reflectively consider the proposition (or inference) in question, I am able simply to see or grasp or apprehend that the proposition is *necessary*. . . Such a rational insight, as I have chosen to call it, does not seem in general to depend on any particular sort of criterion or on any further discursive or ratiocinative process, but is instead direct and immediate . . . As observed above, the idea of such insight has been widely rejected in recent epistemology. It will strike many, perhaps most, contemporary philosophers as unreasonably extravagant . . . Once it is accepted that this sort of insight cannot be accounted for in any epistemologically useful way by appeal

to the allegedly unproblematic apparatus of definitions or linguistic conventions, a standard reaction is to disparage it as objectionably mysterious, perhaps even occult ...⁵³

Although BonJour is specifically addressing our ability to know necessary propositions, his comments apply equally to our knowledge of other kinds of propositions. Rationalists such as BonJour and Spinoza believe that we possess a faculty of intuition (or, in BonJour's parlance, "rational insight"), because they think we are able to know certain truths independently of experience and ratiocination, and the only way to know truths independently of experience and ratiocination is via intuition. While such a faculty was endemic in philosophy until Hume (as BonJour points out⁵⁴), it is not unproblematic. The most obvious and troubling problems arise when the "how" questions are asked: namely, how is such knowledge possible? How does intuition work and what justifies it? One difference between Spinoza and contemporary epistemologists is that the latter seem more aware of the seriousness and difficulty of these questions than Spinoza, and so they offer much more extensive and explicit answers to them. Nevertheless, conceptually, the problem confronting both parties is the same, and I doubt that many contemporary philosophers would be so bold as to suggest that they have solved it.

Even once we figure out what Spinoza meant by intuition, it is probably erroneous to imply (as the argument does at the beginning of this subsection) that the *sapiens* always deliberates in an intuitive and non-rational manner. This brings us to the second qualification that the argument needs. One of the key differences between Spinoza's ethics and that of the Stoics is that Spinoza's ideal moral agent does not undergo a transformation as she becomes wise. Whereas the Stoics conceived of an enormous gulf separating the sage from the fool such that one is either entirely wise or entirely foolish, Spinoza thinks that *sapiens* is capable, at times, of sagacity; at other times, of perfectly respectable (even if not sagacious) moral discourse and behavior; and perhaps even at other times, of acts of imagination or opinion. This is evident by, for example, the three kinds of knowledge presented in IIP4oS2. It is clear that Spinoza esteems the latter two much more highly than the first, but it is also clear that he does not believe any of us can just know things rationally and intuitively. *Qua sapiens*, the wise person may only think and act in a wise manner; but the wise person is not fully characterized by her wisdom; in addition, she is rational and opinionated. Since the wise person possesses all three kinds of knowledge, she will at times deliberate in the terms of each kind.

Furthermore, and in a related point, there may be an unnecessary antinomy supposed here between reason and "intuition."⁵⁵ Let me make a comparison to Descartes. Periodically, the debate over whether the *cogito* is inferential or not is rejoined in the literature. One side argues that

it is – that one must first think, “I think,” then (the “then” is logical) one thinks, “I am.” The other side argues that it is not – as one thinks, “I think,” one simultaneously thinks, “I am.” But it is hard to see how this matters. For the same person could, on one occasion, conceive of the *cogito* inferentially, while, on another, conceive of it non-inferentially, without ever doubting its truth or certainty or thinking that its place in philosophy has changed. Likewise in Spinoza’s ethics. Sometimes the *sapiens* will need to “work things out.” When she does so, she is clearly deliberating in the manner I described in the previous sub-section. But on other occasions, she will immediately know what the ethical response or understanding should be, and commit herself to it without hesitation. It may even be that the relevant moral factors are the same in both instances, and yet she will rationalize them one time and intuit them another. This is possible because the *sapiens* is still a human, and so lacks the perfect knowledge required to know always what the demands of morality are.

These and perhaps other qualifications are needed, but with them in mind, I think the basic conclusion of the argument at the beginning of this sub-section is correct: that is, I think that the *sapiens* does on occasion deliberate in terms that are different from ordinary moral deliberation. One consequence of this is that Spinoza’s theory of moral deliberation is not univocal. Much or even most of our moral deliberation consists in something akin to rule-case deduction, but in some special cases one (or at least the *sapiens*) might deliberate “intuitively,” relying on one’s vast reservoir of knowledge and understanding in order to achieve direct insight into the matters before one. This special deliberation is not unlawful; it does not somehow transgress nature’s laws (that would be impossible, according to Spinoza). Instead, it is a-lawful, conducted utterly without reference to the laws.

One final point. If I understand him correctly, Spinoza presents us with a theory of moral deliberation that incorporates elements of both the generalist and the particularist interpretations of the ancient Stoic theory. Should we say, then, that he was somehow “influenced” by the Stoics? It certainly is possible that Spinoza read the Stoics, detected competing views on how we deliberate over moral matters, agreed with both these views, and chose to fold them into his own ethics. But the texts available to us are very far from establishing this possibility. Since one of the requirements for claims of influence is convincing textual (not just conceptual) evidence, I would be reluctant to make such a claim.

IV. Conclusions

To sum up: contemporary scholars are divided over the correct interpretation of ancient Stoicism on moral deliberation. Even assuming agreement among all ancient Stoics, it is possible to see them as holding either a

rule-case deduction model (in which moral deliberation consists in deducing the correct response to or understanding of one's case from the relevant natural laws) or a situationally-sensitive one (where moral deliberation consists in consulting a set of natural norms that provide guidance but do not determine the morally correct outcome). Both of these resonate in the early modern period. With his keen interest in natural laws and concern with the powerful skeptical movement then afoot, Grotius developed a sophisticated theory of natural laws and applied this theory to political and ethical issues, including moral deliberation. The result in the case of moral deliberation is a conception highly reminiscent of the ancient Stoics, as the "generalists" read them. Spinoza, too, thought that natural laws were a promising resource for philosophy, and he wove them into his metaphysics and ethics. When we deliberate rationally, Spinoza believes we deliberate in much the way that Grotius and the Stoics understood as generalists did. There are times, however, when we rely on intuition and not reason to form a plan of action or to understand our situation. Unlike reason and rational deliberation (which are structured in terms of the natural laws), intuition and intuitive deliberation depend on insight into the essences of things before us, insight that consists in a special knowledge of concrete particulars. Because and insofar as intuition and intuitive deliberation depend on the circumstances before us, this highest form of knowledge and deliberation closely resembles the heuristics of ancient Stoicism understood as particularist.

These are the substantive philosophical points of this chapter. To close, I want to make a couple of metatheoretical ones, the first of which concerns my decision to couple Grotius and Spinoza with the Stoics. Apart from the intrinsic interest of their views, the reason I chose Grotius and Spinoza (and not some other early moderns) is that they nicely exhibit the remarkable suppleness of Stoic theory, at least in its transmitted form. Stoics, Grotius, and Spinoza devised accounts of deliberation that, for all their differences, are recognizable in light of one another and as variations of the same basic theme. Some of the differences of interpretation by the early moderns are probably due to the fact that ancient Stoicism was so imperfectly understood in their time. But the history of the ancient Stoa itself – the numerous debates among Stoics concerning various points of doctrine – shows just how much room there was for disagreement between Stoics.⁵⁶ In addition to the explicit commitments entailed by acceptance of its formal theory, Stoicism provides a set of regulative and constitutive norms that philosophers can use to understand the world and our place in it. This fact, I think, is worth considering when reflecting on the Stoic legacy to early modern philosophy.

Mention of the Stoic "legacy" brings me to my final point. I have interspersed various historiographical and methodological comments among my discussion of the explicit historical and philosophical issues. My main reason for doing so is that the topic seems to demand it. In essence, I have been (1)

arguing that Stoics and some early moderns conceived of moral deliberation in roughly the same terms, and (2) trying to explain what these terms are. When making such an argument, it is easy to fall into the trap of what Richard Rorty calls “doxography.” This is a “genre” or approach to history of philosophy that consists in the “attempt to impose a problematic on a canon drawn up without reference to that problematic, or, conversely, to impose a canon on a problematic constructed without reference to that canon.”⁵⁷ As Rorty so forcefully argues, doxography is fraught with difficulties: it presupposes that all figures across the history of philosophy (or, at least, across the historical spectrum under consideration) were interested in the same set of problems and devised comparable solutions to those problems. This may or may not be true (Rorty doubts that it is, because he doubts that philosophy is a “natural kind”⁵⁸). But regardless of that, it certainly cannot be taken for granted that philosophers such as the Stoics versus Grotius and Spinoza, living in two vastly different eras, shared similar concerns. As it turns out, close analysis of the texts reveals that the Stoics, Grotius, and Spinoza do have something important in common – they do think of moral deliberation in remarkably similar ways. Nevertheless, it would be hard to repose much confidence in this analysis without having some assurance on the historiographical and methodological issues. It was my desire to control for this problem – my desire not to do “doxography” – that led me to think and write about the nature of philosophical legacies, early modern interpretations of Stoicism, the texts they used to learn about Stoicism, the nature of influence, and so forth.⁵⁹

Notes

1. Cf. Gerard Watson’s statement, expressed with appropriate irony, that “There are subtler points for investigation in the philosophy of the Stoics than their statements on natural law, but no doctrine attributed to them has been more influential” (Watson (1996), 216).
2. Although this would provide a valuable contrastive foil, space won’t permit me to discuss other prominent theories of moral deliberation that are distinct from and in competition with the Stoics’. For a sketch of Plato’s theory, see Striker (1987); for extensive discussion of Aristotle’s, see Cooper (1975), esp. 76ff.
3. On this, both of the interpretations I shall be discussing agree. Gisela Striker writes, “The Stoics begin with the notion of goodness as rational order and regularity, and then define virtue and just conduct in terms of obedience to the laws of nature” (Striker (1987); reprinted in her (1996), 219 (all citations will be to the reprint)). On the other side Brad Inwood writes, “The natural law is the rational plan of Zeus for men . . .” (Inwood (1987), 100.
4. For Annas, see her (1993), Chapter 2, esp. 84–108. For Mitsis, see his (1993), (1994a), and (1994b). For Striker, see her (1987) and (1991).
5. Striker (1987), 218.
6. Mitsis (1994b), 4813.

7. Cf. Striker (1987), 219.
8. See D.L. 7.109; Sextus Empiricus, P.H. 3.247–8; Plutarch *On Stoic self-contradictions* 1044F–1045A.
9. Mitsis (1994b), 4845.
10. Annas (1993), 105.
11. For Inwood, see his (1985), esp. 105–11, (1987) and (1999b). For Long, see his (1983), esp. 191ff. For Vander Waerdt, see his (1994b) and (1994c).
12. So Inwood (1999b) argues about the law “always pursue virtue”: “That it is exceptionlessly right to pursue virtue and choose the good is true enough, and *in some sense* not vacuous; but from the point of view of the choosing agent who is not yet a sage it is hard to see how this would provide any substantive guidance” (105).
13. For this account of rough laws, I am drawing especially on “Mental Events,” reprinted in Davidson (1980), 217ff.
14. Inwood (1999b), 108.
15. Long (1983), 192.
16. Vander Waerdt (1994b), 275.
17. Cf. Vander Waerdt (1994b), 276.
18. In fact, I think *rapprochement* between them is possible, and I attempt to show how in Chapter 3 of my (2002).
19. Because he has been all but ignored in recent decades, this may be news to the non-specialist in early modern philosophy. It is beyond the purview of my chapter to prove the point, but as some indication of Grotius’ importance, let me simply mention that his books appear in the libraries of virtually all the major philosophers of the early modern period, and were regularly cited by many of them.
20. Although it unfortunately came to my attention too late for use here, a collection of papers on Grotius and Stoicism is being published as a special issue of *Grotiana* (new series), 22 (2001). It is also coming out as a book (Winkel and Blom, forthcoming).
21. Book I, Chap. 1, §1. Translations of *De iure* here and throughout are based William Whewell’s 1853 edition, though I have taken the liberty to modify it on occasion.
22. By choosing Carneades as spokesman for the position he opposes, Grotius invites his readers to think of himself as a Stoic, for they would have known of the famous debates between Carneades and the Stoics. This is perhaps the most striking literary evidence of deep appeal Stoicism held for Grotius. The historical background here is also important. Prior to the composition of *De iure*, Lipsius had engaged in groundbreaking work distinguishing sharply for the first time in modern Europe the different ancient schools, especially Skepticism and Stoicism. As a result of Lipsius’ work, it became possible for the first time to employ the resources of one school against the other (in much the way that the original Skeptics and Stoics would have done in their debates). In the opinion of many scholars, Grotius was among the first to realize this possibility and capitalize on it. So Richard Tuck (1983) writes, “What Lipsius did was to point to the possibility that a refutation of skepticism could come from a broadly Stoic direction, and Grotius almost immediately made that possibility actual” (48).

23. From the London 1738 edition (translation anonymous), p.xv. The Latin is, “*proinde . . . nullam esse justitiam . . .*”
24. *De iure praedae*, Chapter Two. This and all translations of *De iure praedae* are by Gwladys L. Williams (1950).
25. Cf. D.L. 7.85; Cicero *De Finibus* 3.16, *De Officiis* 1.11. On the ancient background generally, see Jacques Brunschwig (1986), esp. 128ff.
26. As Richard Tuck (1991) explains, “[Grotius] went back to the principles of the Stoics upon which men like Lipsius had based their pessimistic and relativist view of the world, and in particular the Stoic claim that the primary force governing human affairs is the desire for self-preservation. But he interpreted this desire in *moral* terms, as the one and only *universal right*: no one could ever be blamed for protecting themselves . . .” (506).
27. *De iure praedae*, Chapter II (Williams translation, 10).
28. In an interesting critique of Tuck’s reading of Grotius, Robert Shaver (1996) argues that Tuck errs in seeing Grotius as “grounding” natural law on self-interest and using self-interest to defeat skepticism. In Shaver’s opinion, “sociableness” is Grotius’ primary instinct and the basis of his argument against skepticism (35). Shaver is certainly right to emphasize the importance of the instinct for society in Grotius. But I am not convinced that it is necessary to decide whether, for Grotius, self-interest or “sociableness” was the more basic instinct. As I understand him, Grotius took self-interest and the desire for society to be aspects of one fundamental human impulse. This is why he incorporates both principles of self-interest and society into his four fundamental Laws of Nature. At different points in the argument, it is convenient to stress different aspects of this impulse. But its unity and capacity to incorporate seemingly disparate drives such as self-interest and “sociableness” is not doubted by Grotius. For what it’s worth, the Stoics before him and Spinoza after also believed in such an impulse.
29. See “Prolegomena,” §7, for a list.
30. It is true that Grotius sees a divine source of Natural Law. He writes, “here we are brought to another origin of *Ius*, besides that natural source; namely, the free will of God, to which, as our reason irresistibly tells us, we are bound to submit ourselves” (§12). He perceives an important connection to Stoicism at this point: it is “in this sense [that] Chrysippus and the Stoics said that the origin of *Ius* or Natural Law was not to be sought in any other quarter than in Jove himself . . .” (§12). At the same time, however, he also carefully circumscribes God’s part in the Law. The laws can be accredited to God only in the sense that “it was by His pleasure that such principles can exist in us” (§12). This is one way in which Grotius’ thought seems to have developed from the early *De iure praedae* to the mature *De iure*. The grounding of the laws on the divine nature is undeniable in *De iure praedae*; see, for example, the first Rule (“What God has shown to be His Will, that is law”) and Grotius’ comment that this Rule “points directly to the cause of law” – viz., God’s revealed will (Williams translation, 8). By the time of the *De iure*, however, Grotius is able to declare that even if God did not exist, the Natural Law would exist in its current form and be equally binding on us (see “Prolegomena” §11).
31. Cf. Knud Haakonssen (1985): “At the center of Grotius’s idea of natural law is . . . the concept of humankind’s social nature. It is inherent in our

- nature or a law of our nature that to live humanly, we should live socially” (249).
32. These are Laws 3 and 4 of *De iure praedae* (see Chapter II; Williams translation, 13). The Stoic flavor of these laws might be taken note of. Compare them, for example, with what Malcolm Schofield (1999) says about Antipater: “It was probably Antipater who interpreted the principle that no man ought to commit injustice against any other as the idea that no one should commit violence against another, and who derived this idea from natural *oikeiosis*” (763). While Schofield doesn’t suggest that Antipater either elevated his principles into formal laws of nature or used them as part of a defense against moral skepticism, both the actual content of Antipater’s principle as well as the means by which he obtained it closely resemble Grotius’ law and method. Compare also the *formula* enunciated by Cicero in *De Officiis* (3.19 ff., esp. 3.20–22).
 33. As Richard Tuck (1987) has written, “Grotius presented these laws . . . as principles which all men could accept, and which all societies would acknowledge” (111).
 34. *De iure praedae*, Chapter II (Williams translation, 29).
 35. I do not wish to suggest that Spinoza *exclusively* relies on natural laws to formulate and argue for the key ethical concepts I am about to discuss. My point is rather that the laws are one important source or foundation (both conceptual and argumentative) for them.
 36. Chap. II, Section 7; translations (with occasional silent adjustments) of the *TP* are by Elwes (1951). Since the in-text reference will fix the location of the text, I will not footnote each quotation.
 37. All translations from the *Ethics* are by Curley (1985). When referring to the *Ethics*, instead of page numbers I will employ what have become the standard abbreviations: a Roman numeral to refer to the Part, “D” for “Definition,” “A” for “Axiom,” “P” plus an Arabic numeral for a Proposition, “Cor” for “Corollary” (with an Arabic numeral where appropriate), “Dem” for “Demonstration” (with an Arabic numeral where appropriate), “S” for “Scholium” (with an Arabic numeral where appropriate), and so on.
 38. Chapter 7 (G III: 102). This and all translations of the *TTP* are by Shirley (1998). See also *TTP* Chapter 3 (Shirley translation, 38) and the “Introduction” to *Descartes’ Principles of Philosophy*.
 39. It is also strikingly similar to Grotius’ method: “it is expedient for our purposes to order the discussion as follows: first, let us see what it is true universally and as a general proposition; then, let us gradually narrow this generalization, adapting it to the special nature of the case under consideration” (*De iure praedae*, Chapter 1 (Williams translation, 7)). I want to add that, in my opinion, Spinoza owes an under-acknowledged intellectual debt to Grotius. Two of Grotius’ books were in his library (*Defensio Fidei catholicae de satisfactione Christi* and *De imperio summarum potestatum circa sacra commentarius* (see items 55 and 56 in the list of books found in Spinoza’s library on his death ([Anonymous], 1965)). In addition, a variety of Grotian arguments, examples, and positions appear in Spinoza’s corpus, proof that not only did Spinoza have access to Grotius’ work, but he also read it and found it useful. Spinoza’s debt to Grotius is important for many reasons, but especially so for this chapter, since,

given Grotius' own debt to the Stoics and attempts to reconstruct their system, we have through him a fairly direct transmission of Stoic ethical thought to Spinoza.

40. Chapter 4 (G III: 59).
41. The need for an emphasis on "rational" will become apparent in the next sub-section.
42. Cf. also *TTP* Chapter 6 (Shirley translation, 73–4) and *Ethics* IIIPref ("the laws and rules of Nature according to which all things happen and change from one form to another are everywhere and always the same. So our approach to the understanding of the nature of things of every kind should likewise be one and the same; namely, through the universal laws and rules of Nature.").
43. And Grotius does in Rule IV of *De iure praedae* (Williams translation, 23).
44. Probably the most extensive discussion of parts and wholes, and the relation of a part's laws to the laws of the whole, occurs in Letter 32. See also *Ethics* IP17 and 21–2.
45. This concept of "practice" as well as the two examples of practices are taken from Rawls (1955).
46. Chapter 4 (G III: 59).
47. See, for example, Curley's note to IVP72S.
48. Even though it helps to illuminate the corresponding passage in the *Ethics*, I will ignore the discussion of the fourth proportional in the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (henceforth: *TdIE*), §§23–4, since it presupposes four modes of knowledge, not three (Spinoza drops one of them by the time of *Ethics*).
49. See Jonathan Bennett (1984), 365, and references there. In general, Bennett's discussion of *scientia intuitiva* is very good, and I am largely following it here.
50. Cf. *TdIE* §101: The essence of a singular, changeable thing "is to be sought only from the fixed and eternal things . . . Indeed these singular, changeable things depend intimately, and (so to speak) essentially, on the fixed things that they can neither be nor be conceived without them."
51. Wilson (1996), 132.
52. Cf. these comments of Wilson's (*ibid.*): "A couple of relevant points will come to light as we complete our discussion of Part 2, and take up the role of the third kind of knowledge in Part 5. But I cannot, regrettably, promise any dramatic elucidation of this important notion" (119) and "But, it seems to me, this is about as far as the texts take us. So in the end we are left with a riddle: What is it, exactly, to come to perceive the 'inmost essences' of singular things as they follow from the necessity of divine nature? A good solution to this riddle would be . . . a fundamental contribution . . . But, unfortunately, I know of none" (132–3).
53. BonJour (1998), 106–7.
54. *Ibid.*, 17.
55. For valuable admonitions about the use of the words "intuition" and "intuitionism" in ethics, see Annas (1993), 89–90.
56. For further discussion of this issue, see Long's Chapter 1 in this volume, Section V (eds.).
57. Rorty (1984), 62.

58. Ibid., 63–4.
59. Versions of this chapter were presented at a symposium on the history of Stoic ethics, organized by Steven Nadler at the American Philosophical Association meetings in Minneapolis, May 2001, and at *Der Einfluß des Hellenismus auf die Philosophie der frühen Neuzeit*, organized by Gábor Boros at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany, July 2001. Thanks to all present for their comments. Thanks also and especially to Brad Inwood, Phillip Mitsis, and Calvin Normore.

The *Discourse on the Method* and the Tradition of Intellectual Autobiography

Stephen Menn¹

I. The *Discourse* and Its Genre

When Descartes' mathematics, and what was true in his physics, were surpassed, and what was false in his physics was refuted and ridiculed, the two main works that survived the wreck, and continue to shape our picture of the man, were the *Discourse on the Method* and the *Meditations*. Of these, the *Meditations* is less personal. The Meditator of the *Meditations* is not specifically René Descartes. Rather he, or she, is a role that any of us can fill if we choose to pursue this path of thinking. By contrast, the *Discourse* presents to us the life and aims and undertakings, not precisely of René Descartes – for the original 1637 publication was anonymous – but at any rate of the person who is the author of the *Essays* that the *Discourse* introduces (the *Geometry*, the *Dioptrics*, and the *Meteors*), who has made many new discoveries through a special method of “searching for truth in the sciences” and who is also the author of some more mysterious treatises that he has chosen not to publish. The *Discourse* presents this impressive but anonymous person as having made an almost-complete break with the traditional disciplines in which he was educated; he begins his own intellectual work, when he does begin it, not from the lessons of his teachers or from books or from what he learned by travelling in “the book of the world,” but from his own private reflections that lead him to the method described in Part Two. He grudgingly acknowledges the debts of this method to traditional logic and, in mathematics, to “the [geometrical] analysis of the ancients and the algebra of the moderns” (AT VI,17), but he recognizes no such debt to any kind of philosophy other than logic, or to any other discipline of more than narrowly technical scope.

But we know better than to take Descartes' self-presentation at face value, and it is fair to ask how novel the *Discourse* itself really is. It will help to distinguish two questions. First, does the *Discourse* belong to some established kind of writing whose rules it more-or-less consciously follows, or is it a formal

innovation? Second, how new in content is what the *Discourse* says about its author and his method, and how new is the advice it addresses to its reader founded on this authorial self-presentation? These are the kinds of questions that we are now used to asking about the *Meditations*. The *Meditations*, even more than the *Discourse*, present themselves as restarting the enterprise of knowledge *ex nihilo*, beginning by withdrawing assent from everything we have observed through the senses or heard from other people; but we have not let this scare us out of seeing that the *Meditations* are formally modelled on earlier “spiritual exercises” such as those of Augustine’s *Confessions* VII, and that, in their philosophical content, they use and transform concepts, doctrines, and arguments from Augustine and others. But this kind of research does not seem to have begun in earnest on the *Discourse on the Method*.² This may be in part because the *Discourse* belongs formally to a kind of writing more obscure and less fashionable than “spiritual exercises.” Of course, if we define the genre of the *Discourse* broadly enough, we can fit it into something familiar, but then it is likely to be too broad to be useful in interpretation. It is certainly true that the *Discourse*, in whole or in part, is an autobiography, a preface (to the *Essays*), a critique of traditional education, and a charter for a scientific research program, all of which are kinds of writing with many earlier instances. But it would be much more useful for understanding Descartes’ authorial strategy in the *Discourse* if there had been a pre-existing genre of, say, autobiographical prefaces to collections of scientific works containing a critique of established educational practices and a prescription for scientific method. And, as a matter of fact, there was such a genre, going back to ancient models and imitated both in the Middle Ages and by some of Descartes’ contemporaries. I don’t know how to show that Descartes had read any one particular book of this kind, but I think that the fit between the *Discourse* and generic features of this kind of writing is too close for coincidence, and that Descartes must have known that he was writing, and must have intended to write, a book of this traditional kind; his contemporary readers knew this too, and this is part of the explanation for why (as work by Dan Garber and others has shown) none of Descartes’ contemporaries seem to have thought in 1637 that they were witnessing a revolution.³

I should admit both that this prehistory of the *Discourse* is complicated, and that I am ignorant of much of it. It is a history, not of a single entirely uniform kind of writing, but a group of related and overlapping kinds. And while I think I know who began this history, and some of its main later names, I am missing too many pieces to be sure that I know its overall shape. But I hope that, by suggesting a context for the *Discourse*, I will stimulate others to discover what is missing, and to take the rereading of the *Discourse* itself, in the light of its historical contexts, further than I can do here.

To see what possible models we might look to, and how the *Discourse* might turn out to follow or to diverge from them, it will help to say a bit

more about what the *Discourse* is supposed to be about. The title is slightly ambiguous. *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences* should mean “discourse on the method for rightly conducting one’s reason and searching for truth in the sciences.” But it might just mean “discourse on the method for rightly conducting *his* reason,” the author’s: as Descartes says, “my aim is not to teach here the method which everyone must follow for rightly conducting his reason, but only to show how I have tried to conduct my own” (AT VI,4). Indeed, it would be impossible to use the *Discourse* to learn how-to. Descartes does list, briefly and without explanation, four entirely unoriginal rules of method in Part Two, but that is all; as he himself says, his method “consists more in practice than in theory” (AT I,349) and so cannot really be taught. As he says, he calls the text “not *Treatise on the Method*, but *Discourse on the Method*, which is the same as *Preface or Foreword about Method*, to show that my aim was not to teach it, but only to talk about it” (ibid.). While Descartes does not tell his readers enough about his method to teach them to practice it themselves, he tries to persuade them of its value by presenting the *Essays* as fruits of his personal method, “to give proof [/test] of the universal science which he proposes” (AT I,339). But except for the very brief discussion in Part Two, Descartes is not talking about anyone’s scientific method in any narrow sense; rather, he is describing the education of the scientist as a person (including self-habitation in restraining precipitancy in judgment, and the formation of a personal moral code): Descartes is promising (and offering himself as evidence) that a person so formed will be ideally suited to engage in the sciences, and indeed that he will have a vision of a “universal science,” of how all the sciences fit together into a single enterprise. So the *Discourse* is not didactic but protreptic to education as a scientist, and it functions rhetorically by giving a *paradeigma* of the successful education of a scientist – namely, the author himself: Descartes marks this rhetorical function when he says that he “puts this writing forward only as a history, or, if you prefer, as a fable, in which, among some models that one might imitate, one will perhaps find others that one will have reason [/do well] not to follow” (AT VI,4).

But Descartes’ account of his own education – his own *self*education, which began by rejecting his school education and starting over – will not be purely inner and psychological: in order to show the reader the benefits of this education, he also wants to describe its concrete fruits – namely, his books, both the *Essays in the Method* and other books that he is not now making available; so Descartes describes why he wrote these books and gives an introductory description of their contents. The result should be, if you are indeed the kind of reader with a natural thirst for knowledge that the *Discourse* seeks to reach, to whet your appetite for the *Essays in the Method* and to show you what to read them for. But beyond that, it is supposed to whet your appetite for Descartes’ method, which you will

have to discover for yourself by discerning and imitating what the author was doing in the *Essays*. Descartes' account of his own education shows that he was disappointed in books. His own books will make the situation a little better for those who come after him, not directly by serving as authoritative textbooks (any attempt to use the *Geometry* as a textbook of geometry would be a hideous failure), but by stimulating you to discover for yourself, with Descartes and his books as a model, what Descartes had had to discover by himself (so he would have you believe) without any model at all.

This is no doubt all familiar. But it will be useful to have it all set out in comparing the *Discourse* with other books, from Descartes' time and earlier, that share some of the same goals and rhetorical strategies. One immediate comparison is with other texts on scientific education. Many of Descartes' eminent contemporaries contributed such texts to a collection, inspired chiefly by Gabriel Naudé, *Hugonis Grotii et aliorum Dissertationes de Studiis Instituendis*, published in 1645 by Elzevier, who had just the previous year published the Latin version of Descartes' *Discourse*.⁴ The *Dissertationes* is a grab-bag of twenty-odd texts by different authors, each giving advice on how you should educate yourself in some particular scientific or literary discipline; sometimes they give you *paradeigmata* of successful education; very often they give lists of books that might be useful for your education in the given discipline, explaining why these books were written and how you should read them for the most profit.

These texts differ more or less from the *Discourse* in that they are often about one single discipline rather than about all the sciences together; in that, often, they do not take the author himself as the *paradeigma* for education; and in that, often, when they describe useful books in the field, they do not take the author's own books as the central or sole examples. But one text in the volume stands out in all three of these respects, Tommaso Campanella OP's *De libris propriis et recta ratione studendi syntagma* (commissioned by Naudé, and formally a letter to Naudé). Campanella is talking about all the disciplines, and he concentrates on his own writings on all of them, and he begins from his own education in all of them, beginning at age five. In Chapter 1, "On his own books," Campanella goes through the different phases of his life, saying what books he wrote when and why; in Chapter 2, he explains the right way to philosophize, noting the natural prerequisites (intelligence, good memory, unflagging study, and so on) and then laying down rules of method, which presumably have governed Campanella's own work; in Chapter 3, he explains the right way to write, especially in works either of scientific investigation or of scientific teaching; and in the fourth and last chapter, basing himself on these principles, he gives his judgment on the main writers who preceded him, especially but not exclusively in the sciences. In his accounts of how to philosophize and how to write, while Campanella is describing and justifying his own practice, he is also giving

directions to the reader, who is exhorted and addressed in the second person singular especially in the list of rules of method in Chapter 2, Article 2. Campanella is concerned with his reader's education, and in Chapter 2, Articles 3–6, he lays out careful advice for what books to read in each discipline, and, especially, for what order to read them in; Campanella sees his own self-education, and his own teenage rejection of the Peripatetic education that his Dominican brethren had tried to give him, as paradigmatic for what his reader will have to do; and Campanella hopes that his own books will be useful in his reader's education, although he does not want to throw earlier writers overboard.

As I said earlier Descartes' *Discourse* was an autobiographical preface to a collection of the author's scientific works, containing a critique of established educational practices and a prescription for scientific method; the Campanella too, while not literally a preface, does give a *catalogue raisonné* of the author's works, beginning with an autobiography in Chapter 1 (it was a colorful life, with periods of imprisonment) and especially with a critique of established education in Chapter 1, Article 1, and giving a prescription for scientific method in Chapter 2. And while Campanella's prescriptions are quite different from Descartes' – Campanella says Descartes-like things about beginning with doubt and withholding assent as long as possible, and about forming your own judgment and not trusting to any previous sect, but he also favors learning the complete "history" of everything, and thus in particular *reading*, a practice Descartes thinks less well of – Campanella captures his readers' support for his method by first narrating his dissatisfaction with what he learned from his teachers, much as Descartes supports the method of Part Two of the *Discourse* with the narrative of educational disappointment in Part One. As Campanella describes it, at the age of fourteen or thereabouts,

I took down in writing lectures on logic and physics and psychology; but then, since I was troubled that what was being delivered to me in the Peripatos seemed to be not unmixed truth, but falsehood in place of truth, I examined all the commentators on Aristotle, Greek and Latin and Arabic, and I began to doubt more and more about their dogmas; and so I wished to inspect whether what they said was also to be read in the world, which I understood from the teachings of wise men to be God's living codex. And when my teachers could not give satisfaction to the arguments which I pressed against their lectures, I resolved to read for myself through all the books of Plato, Pliny, Galen, the Stoics and the Democriteans, but especially those of Telesio, and to compare them with the primary codex, the world, so that I might learn from the original autograph what was right and wrong in the copies.

And indeed the method Campanella will recommend is to read widely but sceptically both in the books of men and in the world, and then to pass critical judgment by testing some of these testimonies against others, above all against nature and sense-experience. By contrast, while Descartes too "spent

several years studying in the book of the world” (end of *Discourse* Part One, AT VI,10), his discovery of his own method came only when he abandoned that and “made the resolution to study also in *myself*” (ibid.). Descartes went on to draw his scientific system much more from his own internal resources – or, rather, Descartes chooses to present himself as drawing his scientific system much more from his own internal resources – than Campanella had done.

Descartes and Campanella are not particularly close, either in what they believe about the world or in what they believe about method; they were both Copernicans and anti-Aristotelians, but that is all. They were contemporaries (Campanella’s dates are 1568–1639, Descartes’ 1596–1650), and at least friends-of-friends-of-friends-of-friends (Descartes-Mersenne-Gassendi-Naudé-Campanella), but there is no reason to think that either influenced the other (Descartes says some unkind things about Campanella’s writing-style and deplors his panpsychist excesses at AT II,47–8 [and cp. AT II,436], but that is all). In particular, the *Discourse* and Campanella’s *De libris propriis* are entirely independent works.⁵ But as we have seen, these two books, despite their differences, share formal features and some not-merely-formal features, such as what seems to have been an obligatory account of their authors’ youthful dissatisfaction with their school-education. These similarities suggest that Descartes and Campanella are both writing in a shared Renaissance genre of intellectual autobiography, with their common features going back to the same ancient model or models.

II. Galen, Ibn al-Haitham, Ghazâlî

If I may say something autobiographical myself, I suddenly saw the key to the puzzle – not specifically about Descartes and Campanella, whom I have discussed only *exempli gratia*, but about the *Discourse* and its genre – when I stumbled on the brief autobiography of Ibn al-Haitham (Alhazen), the great Muslim optical theorist and mathematician (ca. 965–1040).⁶ Two things became immediately clear from this autobiography: first, that Ibn al-Haitham is modelling it on autobiographical texts of Galen (the reason this was immediately clear is that Ibn al-Haitham cites Galen by name four times); and second, that Ibn al-Haitham’s intellectual history as presented in this text is much too close for coincidence to Ghazâlî’s intellectual history as presented in Ghazâlî’s famous *Deliverance from Error*, and this despite the fact that Ibn al-Haitham is mostly talking about what we would call “science” and Ghazâlî is mostly talking about what we would call “religion.” Since Ghazâlî wrote seventy years after Ibn al-Haitham, Ibn al-Haitham was not taking it from Ghazâlî, and it also quickly became clear that Ghazâlî was not taking it from Ibn al-Haitham; rather, the similarities were because Ghazâlî and Ibn al-Haitham were both modelling their self-presentations on Galen’s self-presentation in his various autobiographical texts. If we put Galen and

Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî together, we can see that Galen invented both a distinctive form of autobiographical writing and also a distinctive content to the description of the author's life and discoveries and writings. Our two Muslim authors, and also Renaissance Christian authors such as Campanella and Descartes, are taking over a strategy of self-presentation that had been originally invented by Galen, although Descartes may not have been conscious of Galen as his model, and although I do not claim to know all the links of transmission or even the overall shape of the tradition. What is most interesting is not that this leads our different authors to write autobiographical texts with some formal similarities, but that a surprising amount of the autobiographical content, of what we might have expected to be most personal to each author, is also inherited and adapted by each author to his own situation. In fact, the formal similarities are weak enough that I am not wholly comfortable speaking of a single genre. Galen did not write a single canonical text, called something like *Autobiography*, which all the later authors could imitate; rather, he talks about himself in many places, saying many of the same things but adapting himself to the demands of the context, especially in the *On His Own Books* and the *On the Order of His Own Books* and the *Passions and Errors of the Soul*, but also in scattered passages in many other writings.⁷ What the Muslims and Christians took from Galen was not primarily one book as a model, but the more general strategy of self-presentation which I will describe. Nonetheless, Galen's *On His Own Books* and *On the Order of His Own Books* do seem to have been a more particular model, for some of our authors more than others, and I think we can speak of these books as founding a specifically Galenic genre of autobiography/autobibliography, followed more closely by Ibn al-Haitham and Campanella and more loosely by Ghazâlî and Descartes.

Ibn al-Haitham's text is preserved for us in Ibn abî Uṣaibi'a's biographical dictionary of medicine: Ibn al-Haitham never practiced medicine himself, but as Ibn abî Uṣaibi'a says, he wrote on the theoretical foundations of medicine, and wrote expositions of the works of Galen as well as of Aristotle and of Euclid, Apollonius of Perga, and Ptolemy. Ibn abî Uṣaibi'a says that he copied the text from Ibn al-Haitham's own autograph; it is not clear that Ibn al-Haitham gave it a title, but Ibn abî Uṣaibi'a calls it a "book on what he had done and written in the sciences of the ancients" up to the time of writing, and it is centered, like Galen's *On His Own Books*, on a list of his books, twenty-five in mathematics and forty-five in philosophy (including an enormous work *On the Constitution of the Art of Medicine*, following the order of thirty of Galen's treatises in sequence!). But Ibn al-Haitham embeds this list in an autobiographical account of his dissatisfaction with the sects and disciplines to which he was first exposed, his aspirations to a higher wisdom, and his search for a criterion of truth, until he found a satisfying criterion in the Greek science of logic, and satisfying applications of this criterion in the mathematical disciplines, in physics including the foundations of medicine,

and in metaphysics or theology. As Ibn al-Haitham says at the beginning of the text,

Ever since childhood I have been suspicious about the judgments of these men who differ among themselves, and about the tenacious adherence of every sect among them to the view they judge [true], and so I became a doubter about all of them, being sure that there is only one truth and that there is disagreement about it only [because there is disagreement about] the paths to it.⁸ So when I reached the age for grasping intellectual matters, I dedicated myself to the pursuit of the wellspring of truth, and I turned my desire and my power-of-discovery to grasping that by which the fallacies in the opinions might be revealed, and the darkenings of the abandoned doubter might be dispelled; and I sought with firm resolution to acquire the view which brings [one] near to God (great is his praise!), which leads [one] to his acceptance and guides [one] to obeying and fearing him. And I was as Galen says in the seventh book of his *De methodo medendi*, where he addresses his student: “I do not know how it came about for me, since my childhood – if you wish you might call it marvelous [good] fortune, or inspiration from God, or a kind of madness, or whatever you might ascribe this to – I have disdained the masses of men and set no store by them, and I paid them no heed, but yearned for the love of truth and the pursuit of knowledge, being convinced that there is not given to man anything in this life that is more noble or nearer to God than these two things” [10.457.11ff Kuehn: I am translating the Arabic, which overtranslates the Greek]. And for this reason I plunged into [*kh-w-d*] the varieties of views and judgments, and into the species of the sciences of the religions, and I had no success with any of them, and I could not discern any path from them to the truth, or any new way to a certain view. And I saw that I would not reach the truth except from views whose matter is sensible things and whose form is intelligible things; and I did not find this except in what Aristotle has established in the sciences of logic, physics, and metaphysics, which are the essence and nature of philosophy.⁹

Now for me, and I think for many other readers, the overwhelming impression on reading this was that it is exactly the same (apart from the final satisfaction with Aristotle!) as what Ghazâlî says about himself at the beginning of the *Deliverance from Error*. As Ghazâlî says, “a longing to grasp the realities of things was my habit and custom from my beginnings and the budding of my life, an instinct and a *fiṭra* [divinely given original disposition] implanted in my nature not by my choice or my contrivance” (Watt 21, MR 25).¹⁰ So from childhood, Ghazâlî, like Ibn al-Haitham, observed the different beliefs tenaciously maintained by the different sects – meaning especially the religious sects – and, realizing that they could not all be right, became a doubter about all of them, including the one that he himself had been brought up in. “So the bond of *taqlîd* relaxed from me and inherited creeds were broken off me on approaching the age of youthful assertion, since I saw that the children of Christians always grew up to be Christians, the children of Jews to be Jews and the children of Muslims to be Muslims” (ibid.). The term *taqlîd* is notoriously difficult to translate, and Ghazâlî’s use of it is not quite the same as earlier uses, but roughly it means believing something simply

because people who stand in some particular relation to you (your parents or teachers or the majority or the ruling group in your country) believe it, and not because you have examined the evidence yourself; Ghazâlî thinks that most people believe most of what they believe through *taqlîd*, not only the creeds of Christianity or Islam or the like, but also, for instance, the teachings of whatever sect in philosophy, medicine, or (religious) law they may follow. But someone who thirsts for a comprehension of the realities of things, and observes the views of different people and their reasons for holding them, soon realizes that *taqlîd* cannot give a criterion of truth, since it leads different people to contradictory results. So, as Ghazâlî puts it, “it is a [necessary] condition of the *muqallid* [= person in *taqlîd*] that he should not know that he is a *muqallid*, and when he does [come to] know that, the glass of his *taqlîd* is broken,” and cannot be mended but must be cast back into the fire and forged anew (Watt 27, MR 31).

So Ghazâlî, like Ibn al-Haitham, goes off in search of a criterion of truth (what Ibn al-Haitham had described as “the wellspring of truth, . . . by which the fallacies in the opinions might be revealed”); like Ibn al-Haitham, Ghazâlî searches among the different groups who claim such a criterion, whether particular religious communities, or the “religious sciences” within Islam (such as *kalâm* and *şûfism*), or the “sciences of the ancients” (philosophy in the broadest sense, including logic and mathematics).¹¹ Ghazâlî, in the *Deliverance from Error*, lists the groups that seemed to have the most plausible claims – namely, the *mutakallimûn*, the philosophers, the Ismâ‘îlîs, and the *şûfîs*; and he investigates whether these groups, each applying their distinctive criterion (for the philosophers, it is “logic and demonstration,” for the Ismâ‘îlîs it is “transmission from an infallible *imâm*”; the criteria of all the groups are listed Watt 26–7, MR 31), are able to achieve knowledge that has the desired certainty and that leads us to come near to God. Ghazâlî and Ibn al-Haitham both conclude that *kalâm*, as well as disciplines based merely on authority, do not meet this standard, but Ibn al-Haitham was satisfied with philosophy (he wrote a treatise *That All Things Secular and Religious are Fruits of the Philosophical Sciences*), while Ghazâlî tries to show that philosophy fails the test, and that only *şûfism* succeeds. But despite the different outcomes, the two stories of childhood aspirations to truth – early doubt about traditional convictions, desire for a criterion, critical examination of different disciplines (and writing of treatises in and against these disciplines), an apparent sceptical crisis (described by Ghazâlî much more fully than by Ibn al-Haitham), and the discovery of a criterion leading to the desired knowledge, and thus somehow to the divine – are very close indeed.

There is no reason to think that Ghazâlî had read Ibn al-Haitham’s autobiography – there is no reason to think that anyone at all had read it before Ibn abî Uşaiḃi’a found the autograph in the mid-thirteenth century. The *Deliverance from Error* is incomparably longer, more profound, and more

ambitious than Ibn al-Haitham's little memoir. The two texts, and the two authorial self-presentations, are close because they are following the same traditional model or models. Ibn al-Haitham, the more modest writer, tells us plainly that his model is Galen, by quoting Galen by name four times in six pages, each time taking something Galen says about himself and applying it to his own case; and in centering his discussion on a book-list, he is following specifically Galen's *On His Own Books*. Ghazâlî is much less likely to tell us that he is following someone else's model, especially the model of a pagan philosopher (Ghazâlî tries to conceal the extent of his dependence on the philosophers notably at Watt 40–41, MR 45–6), and I do not claim that Galen is his sole model (the influence of the early ṣūfî Ḥârith Muḥāsibî has often been noted), or that Ghazâlî follows Galen as closely as Ibn al-Haitham does. But I do think that Galen was a very important model for Ghazâlî too, and that this explains many of the features that Ghazâlî shares with Ibn al-Haitham.

We have already seen that Ghazâlî's unchosen and divinely implanted childhood desire to "comprehend the realities of things" is very close to what Galen attributes to himself in the passage from *De methodo medendi* VII that Ibn al-Haitham starts by quoting. Galen also, like Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî, represents himself as having examined many different sects and disciplines (thus in philosophy, he attended the lectures of a Stoic, a Platonist, a Peripatetic, and even an Epicurean, starting at the age of fourteen in his home city of Pergamum, *Passions of the Soul* c8); Galen says that his father had encouraged him "not to declare myself hastily the adherent of any one sect, but to take a long time in order to learn about them and judge them" (*Passions of the Soul* c8, Singer 120, SM I,32). And indeed, even once he has made his mature judgments, Galen presents himself as someone who does not practice only one discipline (he insists that he is a philosopher as well as a doctor, and writes a treatise *That the Best Doctor is Also a Philosopher*) and who does not follow any one sect within each discipline, but sifts out the true from the false within the claims of each sect; as we will see, Ghazâlî follows Galen's self-presentation here quite closely.

Galen also, more surprisingly, has something like the concept of *taqlîd*, and uses it to motivate his search for some method, beyond the ones ordinarily practiced, for discovering the truth in the sciences. We would not expect to find the full Ghazâlîan concept of *taqlîd* in a Greek pagan author. For one thing, Ghazâlî is taking the word "*taqlîd*" from technical discussions in Islamic jurisprudence, where a *muqallid* is someone who follows someone else's legal opinions, as opposed to a *mujtahid*, who makes his own decisions (based on the sources of law) about what is lawful and unlawful; and one of Ghazâlî's aims is to argue against the Ismâ'îlîs, who use sceptical arguments to show that no one except their infallible *imâm* is a competent *mujtahid*, and that everyone else must be *muqallid* on the *imâm*.¹² Nonetheless, Galen is much closer than any other Greek pagan author I know to having the

Ghazâlian concept of *taqlîd*. This is most striking in Galen's complaints about contemporary philosophers and doctors in *On the Order of His Own Books* c1:

Doctors and philosophers form admirations [*thaumazousi*] for other doctors or philosophers without having learned their doctrines, and without having practiced the art of demonstration [*epistêmê apodeiktikê*], by which they would be able to distinguish the false arguments [*logoî*] from the true ones, but some because their fathers were Empiricists or Dogmatists or Methodists, others because their teachers were, or their friends, or because someone from that sect had become celebrated [*ethaumasthê*] in their city. So too with the philosophical sects: people used to become Platonists or Peripatetics or Stoics or Epicureans for different reasons, but now, since it has become possible even to inherit a sect [*nuni d' aph' hou kai diadochai haireseôn eisi*; i.e. since the successive scholars of the Academy, the Peripatos etc. started leaving the sect to their designated successor], many people on this account name themselves after the sect in which they were brought up, especially when they have no other means of making a living. (Singer 23, SM II,80–81)

Galen has a number of different complaints about people who become Stoics or Platonists only by title of inheritance. The slur at the end of the quoted passage apparently means that, lacking other assets, I can call myself "Stephen the Peripatetic" because my father or my schoolteacher was a Peripatetic, and treat the sect as part of the inherited capital I can use to support myself, just as if my father were a shoemaker I might receive from him the tools of the trade and some instruction in how to use them and start calling myself "Stephen the shoemaker."¹³ But Galen's more serious point is that people take over the opinions of some philosophical or medical sect because this is what they are used to hearing and so they assume it to be true, rather than because they know how to demonstrate the conclusions for themselves or have tested whether the arguments offered by rote in their sect are any more demonstrative than the arguments for the opposite conclusions that are offered by rote in another sect. As Ghazâlî puts it, such people "[try to] recognize the truth by the men, and not the men by the truth" (Watt 39, MR 45). Galen says in *On His Own Books* that "those who name themselves Hippocrateans or Praxagoreans, or after any other man, I call slaves" (Singer 5, SM II,95); more interesting than this commonplace, Galen also speaks of irrational motives that lead people to attach themselves to one particular sect, contrasting "the lover of truth" with those who "choose according to an irrational passion, like those who urge on [one side] in the rivalry of the colors in the chariot-races [i.e. the circus-factions]" (*On the Order of His Own Books* c1, Singer 24, SM II,83). Very unusually for a Greek pagan author of his time, Galen notices the Jews and Christians, and he takes them as paradigms for the intellectual attitude he is deploring. "One would more easily teach away [from their allegiance: *metadidaxein*] the followers of Moses and Christ [*tous apo Môsou kai Christou*; cf. the texts cited earlier on those who name themselves *apo*: some person or sect] than the doctors and philosophers who cling to their sects" (*De pulsuum differentiis*

III,3, Kuehn 8.657); and in three passages (two of them preserved only in Arabic!) Galen contrasts his own method of teaching, which is based on demonstration, with that of “the people of Moses and Christ, [who] have commanded [their students] to accept everything by faith.”¹⁴ These were among the very few Greek texts critical of the prophetic religions that were available to the Muslims, and they must have made an impression. Râzî may well be echoing them when he summarily dismisses all of the followers of all of the prophets as being in *taqlîd* and therefore incapable of studying philosophy.¹⁵ Ghazâlî too takes “the children of Christians [who] grow up to be Christians, the children of Jews to be Jews and the children of Muslims to be Muslims” as paradigms of *taqlîd*, and part of his project in the *Deliverance from Error* is to show, against people like Galen and Râzî, that it is possible to be a Muslim without being a *muqallid*.

Galen does not use his observation of *taqlîd*, as Ghazâlî does, to justify an early loss of faith in inherited beliefs and thus a turning to the intellectual disciplines, and indeed this would be much less plausible in a Greek pagan context. For Galen, the encounter with *taqlîd*, and the ensuing sceptical crisis, happen at a slightly later stage, after he has begun studying philosophy, at the age of fourteen, with teachers from different sects: Galen notices the disputes between the sects, and he also notices “that everyone claims that they themselves are giving demonstrations [*apodeiknuein*] and that they are refuting [*elenchein*] their debate-companions” (*On His Own Books* c11, Singer 17–18, SM II, 115; not entirely clear in context whether this is just philosophers, but probably). So Galen realizes that to resolve these disputes, he needs a secure method for constructing demonstrations, and also for judging when an allegedly demonstrative argument really is a demonstration and when it is not, but “like a counterfeit coin, resembles the genuine article but is in reality worthless” (Singer 18, SM II, 116).

So, having handed myself over to all the famous Stoics and Peripatetics of that time [sc. because these schools had the best reputation in logic], I learned many other logical theorems [i.e. non-primitive argument-forms whose validity is demonstrated from the primitive ones] which when I investigated afterwards I found to be useless for demonstrations, but very few which they had discovered to any benefit and which were aimed at attaining the intended goal [i.e. discovering demonstrations]; and, even so, these were disputed among [the philosophers] themselves, and some were also contrary to the common [lit. natural = innate] notions. And by the gods, so far as it depended on teachers, I too would have fallen into the *aporia* of the Pyrrhonists, if I had not had a firm grasp of [*katechôn*] the [truths] of geometry and arithmetic and calculation, in which, for the most part, I had been trained by my father to make progress from the beginning. (Singer 18, SM II, 116)

The problem with the philosophical sciences is not that people do not have arguments for their beliefs, or even that these arguments are not sometimes demonstrative, but that people do not hold these beliefs *because* they have

demonstrative arguments for them; they inherit the beliefs, and they inherit the arguments or invent new ones to support the inherited beliefs and refute their rivals, and they believe that these arguments are demonstrative because the arguments are traditional or because they support the right conclusions, and not because they are in fact demonstrative, even if sometimes, by good luck, they are.¹⁶ Of course, the philosophers recognize that it is important to have demonstrations, and so they invent machinery for generating valid arguments; but since these arguments, no matter how they are stacked, do not reach up from genuine first principles to the desired conclusions, the philosophers surreptitiously relax their conditions for demonstration, and pass off non-demonstrative arguments as if they were the applications of their logical systems. Since the conflict here is not simply between different beliefs each claiming to be true, but between different arguments each claiming to be demonstrative, Galen needs a *criterion*, not simply in the way that reason is a “criterion” for judging the things that appear to the senses, but a criterion for judging also among the different arguments that appear plausible to reason.

Galen expands at greatest length on our need to seek such a criterion in the *Errors of the Soul*, in laying out a program for the scientific-and-moral education of his reader; but his own education, including his own successful search for a criterion or demonstrative method, as described in *On His Own Books* c11, is clearly supposed to be paradigmatic. In the *Errors of the Soul*, the process is supposed to begin with observing the disagreement of the different philosophical sects about the human *telos*. This disagreement, which it is of the highest importance for us to resolve, gives an occasion for scepticism: “according to the Academics and Pyrrhonists, who do not concede that we [can] have scientific demonstration of the things we are seeking, every assent is necessarily precipitous [i.e. non-cataleptic], and so is possibly false; and they say that it is not possible that the opinions of the philosophers who make positive assertions about goods and evils, since these conflict with each other, can all be true, although they might all be false” (*Errors* c1, Singer 128, SM I,47). And Galen entirely agrees with the sceptics on the importance of avoiding precipitous assent (Galen personally has so disciplined himself that never since childhood has he given precipitous assent even in matters of everyday life – for example, whether that is Menippus or Theodorus approaching, or whether so-and-so is back in town as reported; for people who give precipitous assent in such everyday matters cannot be trusted to avoid error in the sciences, *Errors* c6). To make us realize the risk of error, Galen shows us the ways that we might falsely take something as evident that is really non-evident, both among things that appear to the senses and (analogously) among things that appear to reason (*Errors* c6); and he stresses the difficulty of finding a “judge” [*kritēs*] or “criterion” [*kritērion*] that will not require another criterion to confirm that we have found the right one (*Errors* c4, SM I,61). Nonetheless, Galen believes that it is possible

to overcome scepticism, and to reconstruct a practice of assent, including assent to things beyond those immediately evident to sensation or reason, based on such a self-justifying criterion. "Someone who wants to be without error must first investigate whether there is [= can be] demonstration of a non-manifest thing; then, when he discovers [an instance of such demonstration], he must seek . . . what the demonstrative method may be" (*Errors* c1, Singer 128–9, SM I,47, picking up immediately after the passage on the sceptical challenge); then, "when he is persuaded that he has found such [a method], he must first practice it for a long time [on small matters] before he passes to the investigation of the greatest things [such as the question of the *telos* and other great philosophical issues]" (ibid.).

But Galen becomes rather mysterious and allusive about how exactly he himself has discovered such a criterion and a method, and what exactly they are. Both in *On His Own Books* c11 (recounting his own discovery) and in the *Errors of the Soul* (recommending a like procedure for his reader), Galen stresses the importance of beginning with smaller, non-philosophical subjects, especially geometry and what he calls "architecture" (his father's profession), by which he means especially the construction of mechanical devices such as sundials and water-clocks. Galen recommends these disciplines, not only because the practice of demonstration has become better established in them than in philosophy (as he says in *On His Own Books* c11, the different philosophical sects criticize each other's "demonstrations," but unite in praising those of the geometers), but also because in these disciplines you can immediately tell whether your solution to a problem is successful, whereas your errors in philosophy might remain concealed from yourself and from others (*Errors* c3, c5). So learning how to demonstrate in these disciplines will give us good training in demonstrative method in general; Galen especially recommends the model of geometrical analysis (*Errors* c4–5), both because it is specifically a method for *discovering* a demonstration of a given proposition or its contradictory, and because the successes of analysis are self-confirming, since they lead to the discovery of evident first principles and of a sequence of valid arguments from these principles to the desired conclusion (*Errors* c5, with an emphatic contrast between geometrical analysis and philosophy). Once we have practiced ourselves in discovering demonstrations in these disciplines, Galen thinks we can simply apply the same method, or transfer the same intellectual habits, to philosophy and medicine and other disciplines where we do not have immediate confirmation of our results; for the geometrical paradigm will allow us to recognize and to work towards discovering demonstrative arguments on any subject (and also to spot the defects in non-demonstrative arguments, *Errors* c3, c5). And Galen claims that geometrical demonstrations, and specifically geometrical *analysis*, have been the model for his own reasoning in philosophy and medicine; here, geometry contrasts with formal (Peripatetic or Stoic) syllogistic, which is inadequate to produce the kinds of arguments

needed in the real practice of the sciences (*On His Own Books* c11; presumably Galen said more about this in his great lost treatise *On Demonstration*, as well as in his lost monograph *That the Analysis of the Geometers is Better than that of the Stoics*). At least in extant works, though, he says very little to explain how his own modes of reasoning are like those of the geometers; apparently he thinks that if you are not practiced in geometry, such an explanation will do you no good, and if you are practiced in geometry, it will be obvious.

But Galen's emphasis on the geometrical paradigm does not mean that he adopts purely "rationalist" criteria in philosophy and medicine. Galen is in favor of observation; he berates the philosophers (contrasting them with the architects) for their inability or unwillingness to put their claims to an empirical test, even on issues that should be testable, such as whether wood is heavier than water (*Errors* c7). And Galen boasts of being able to prove his medical claims, and to confound his medical rivals, not just by reasoning but by successful cures and by observations; in particular, he claims to have discovered things in dissections that his predecessors had never seen (*On His Own Books* c2). The best doctor or philosopher will support his claims by both reason and sense-experience, and show that these do not conflict. He will also make use of the books of his predecessors, not accepting their conclusions on faith, but applying his criterion to sift what is true from what is false in them (this may also lead him, guided by a principle of charity, to favor particular interpretations of what his predecessors have said, or to judge that some of their books – especially among those ascribed to Hippocrates – are spurious). He will thus be qualified to be an eclectic rather than a member of any established sect. Still, he will prefer the ancient models (Hippocrates in medicine, Plato in philosophy) over their recent imitators and also over their recent rivals (Erasistrateans, Asclepiadeans, Methodists, Stoics, and Epicureans; to a lesser extent Herophilus, the Empiricists, and Aristotle). For it was the degeneracy of the moderns, especially their lack of scientific method, that led him to range further afield, to the mathematical disciplines but also to the books of the ancients, not so much to discover true doctrines as to discover paradigms of scientific method; once we have grasped what (say) Hippocrates' implicit method was, we can not only confirm most of his conclusions, but also discover truths beyond what he himself had discovered (so especially in *That the Best Doctor is Also a Philosopher*). Nonetheless, the best doctor and philosopher is not omniscient, and he will be suspicious of people who make grandiose claims to knowledge; he will have begun by suspending judgment on all questions not immediately evident to the senses or to reason (which includes most philosophical questions). And on such questions as whether the cosmos came-to-be or has existed from eternity, whether there is anything spatially outside it, whether the human soul is immortal, which have no connection with what is evident to us, he will continue to suspend judgment.

At this point, we should step back and ask why Galen is telling us all of this. One of Galen's most sympathetic recent students attributes to him "an intense and overpowering personal conceit,"¹⁷ and of this there is no doubt. Sometimes it becomes simply unbearable to read Galen's boasting about himself – the *On Prognosis* is much worse than the works I have been discussing, and I have been selective even with these in order to trim away some of the boasting. Nonetheless, Galen's motivation in these works is not just uncontrollable boastfulness, but a rational and remarkably successful strategy of justification to establish himself (in the face of real hostility) as an authority in philosophy and medicine – indeed, as *the* authority in medicine, since it is unsafe to read the works of Galen's predecessors without also reading Galen's assessment of them (Galen warns us that it is unsafe even to read the works of Hippocrates without Galen's commentaries to settle their authenticity and interpretation, *On the Order of His Own Books* c3). By describing the defects of the education offered by his own teachers, and indeed by all recent teachers, Galen both establishes his own originality and warns his readers against going to anyone but him (personally or through his books). Of course, in the nature of his case, Galen cannot urge you to follow *him* slavishly either. Nonetheless, he works to establish his own authority, not only on his external successes in the practice of medicine (listed *ad nauseam* in the *On Prognosis*), but also in his independence of any established sect and his possession of a demonstrative method and of a criterion enabling him to sift the true from the false in each sect. Galen supports his claim to possess such a criterion by his many critical writings on each medical sect, and on each philosophical sect as well. For it is important to Galen's strategy of justification that he be not *merely* a doctor: his superiority to other contemporary doctors is not simply that he selects different doctrines from the different sects, but that he can base this judgment on philosophy, both because of his demonstrative method, based on logic (and mathematics), and because of his knowledge of the human body and soul, based on physics (going beyond the knowledge of even the rationalist doctors, especially into the teleological study of the parts of animals and into psychology). But it is also important for Galen to show that he did not accept a ready-made set of opinions in philosophy any more than in medicine: philosophy, like medicine, is mired in irresolvable disputes, and so here too Galen must be an eclectic, applying his demonstrative method and his criterion for good and bad arguments to sort out the truth from among the sects. And Galen helps to win his reader's goodwill, and present himself as an attractive *paradeigma* for the reader, by covering his intellectual arrogance with a kind of humility. Rather than just claiming that he possesses a criterion and has used it to determine the truth in the sciences, Galen speaks of his early *aporia*, his lack not only of scientific knowledge but also of any method for deciding it; he contrasts his own honest uncertainty with the arrogant claims of the doctors and philosophers, and he claims to have learned more toward a

criterion of truth from humbler professions such as architecture than from the philosophers; and to the end he continues to suspend judgment, against the rash claims of the different philosophical sects, on such questions as the plurality of worlds and the immortality of the soul. If we are persuaded of Galen's honesty and love of truth, and see that he has reached success in the sciences starting from a position of *aporia*, we may also be persuaded that we can follow his path to reach the same success ourselves, at least those few of us who have Galen's rare natural abilities and his rare devotion to truth.

From the *Errors of the Soul*, we might get the impression that Galen's advice to an aspiring young doctor or philosopher was first to study a mathematical discipline, then to work out a method of demonstration and a method of testing arguments on the basis of our mathematical experience, and then to apply this method directly to the disputed questions of philosophy or medicine; this need not involve reading Galen, and it might not involve much reading at all, though we might find it useful to read some earlier writers to learn the range of issues in dispute and perhaps spot the occasional demonstration in their works. But this is not what Galen is recommending in the *On the Order of His Own Books*. Rather, Galen is able, through his experiences in the search for truth, to teach you the demonstrative method, to instruct you in all the different areas of medicine and their philosophical presuppositions, and to filter all earlier authorities for you. If you want to come as close as possible to doing what Galen did, you should start by reading Galen; in particular, after some introductory material, you should start by reading Galen's *On Demonstration* (now unfortunately lost), and this, if accompanied by a natural love of truth and by practice in demonstration, will prepare you to read with profit the series of books that Galen has written not "for beginners," but for those who wish to acquire scientific knowledge. For the point of the *On the Order of His Own Books* is that there are two different "orders" that a reader may follow through Galen's books, a hard path for those who want scientific knowledge (and must thus start by learning the demonstrative method) and an easier path for those who will be content with true opinion. We might think that the second path would involve the kind of irrational attachment to a single authority that Galen has been deploring, but he tries to show that accepting his authority can be perfectly rational, though unscientific:

If someone has examined us [Galen's royal "we"] with regard both to [my] whole [way of] life and to [my] works in the art, so as to be persuaded, with regard to the character [*tropos*] of [my] soul, that we do everything without hatred or contentiousness or irrational friendship toward any sect, and with regard to [my] works in the art [i.e. the successes of my medical practice], that they bear witness to the truth of my doctrines—then he, even without demonstrative theory, will be able to benefit from our writings [*hupomnēmata*], not by exact knowledge of the subject-matter (for this belongs only to those capable of demonstration), but by right opinion. (*On the Order of His Own Books* c2, Singer 25, SM II,83)

So this would not be pure *taglid*, because our acceptance of Galen's doctrines will not be based simply on his relation to us (he is the founder of the sect to which we belong), but on objectively observable facts about his character and practical success as a doctor. Naturally, if we are living after Galen's death or geographically far from him, it will be harder for us to make this examination, so Galen obliges us by leaving us a written record by which we can both gain confidence in his doctrines, and learn what those doctrines were. The two autobiographies (the *On the Order of His Own Books* and, written as a sequel, the comprehensive *On His Own Books*) serve as a user's guide to this written record, both for the scientific user and for the less demanding user. As Jaap Mansfeld has shown, Galen's autobiographies belong in an older and wider genre of prolegomena-literature, introductions to the collected works of some authoritative figure in a science, classifying his works, saying who they were written for and why, and how we should read them and in what order; such prolegomena typically contain a *bios* of the author, in order to show how he came to write these books, and to gain credibility for him as an authority. (A paradigm of this literature is Porphyry's *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books*, which still to this day is prefaced to editions of Plotinus' collected works, in the order that Porphyry had imposed on them.) The difference, of course, is that Galen sees *himself* as an authoritative scientific author whose works will be used for educational purposes, and he is determined to write his own prolegomena rather than leaving them to the whim of posterity.¹⁸

My concentration on Galen here may seem excessive. But since he is the founder of the genre of intellectual autobiography that Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî and Descartes are pursuing, it seemed important to lay out the different elements of Galen's self-presentation. Part of the problem is that what Galen established was not so much a genre of *writing* as a more general strategy of self-presentation, which Galen tries out not just in a single canonical *Autobiography* but in passages of many different books, so I have had to bring them together to write his autobiography for him. Nonetheless, later intellectual autobiographers did tend to write one canonical book summing up the strategy of self-presentation which they had, in their different ways and to different degrees, adapted from Galen; and while the most important literary model for the genre in Galen was the *On His Own Books* (especially c11), the Galenic autobiographical genre looks more like the composite I have presented than like any one book of Galen's.

How you react to the information I have assembled from Galen depends on who you are. My official reason for describing Galen's autobiographies was to prove that the points of agreement between Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî were also to be found in Galen, and thus to establish Galen as the founder of the autobiographical genre that Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî share. And that much should be clear. But if, like me, you are more of an Islamicist than a historian of medicine, and were more familiar with

the *Deliverance from Error* than with the Galen texts, your reaction is likely to be astonishment that so much of what we had regarded as distinctively Ghazâlî is in fact Galenic. Ghazâlî was of course well aware of Galen: the *Deliverance from Error*, in a passage that I will come back to, describes how we can have “knowledge that Shâfi‘î [the founder of Ghazâlî’s own legal *madhhab*] is a jurist and that Galen is a doctor” [i.e. that they are authorities in those fields] (Watt 67, MR 68). In the *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, in saying that most philosophers believe in the eternity of the world, Ghazâlî says that Galen was an exception among the philosophers, and quotes a passage from Galen’s *On My Own Opinions* where Galen professes agnosticism about the question.¹⁹ And earlier in the *Deliverance from Error*, in his list of the infidel philosophers that he had to overcome, Ghazâlî has added (alongside the usual Aristotelian-Avicennian philosophy and atheistic materialism) a page-long description of an alleged sect of philosophers, the “naturalists” (Watt 31, MR 35–6), that in fact applies exclusively to Galen (and perhaps, following him, Râzî), and includes citations of two of Galen’s book-titles, the *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* and the *That the Powers of the Soul are Consequent on the Temperaments/Mixtures of the Body*.²⁰ From these texts by themselves one might think that Ghazâlî knew of Galen simply as a famous ancient doctor-philosopher with pious views about natural teleology and an impious scepticism about immortality, and had no more specific engagement with Galen’s texts. But, in fact, Ghazâlî follows Galen’s autobiographical model very closely, and I will argue that this is conscious and deliberate.

As I have already said, Ghazâlî, like Galen and Ibn al-Haitham, describes his unquenchable thirst since childhood for genuine knowledge; his curiosity about different opinions (especially in religion); his observation of *taqlîd* and his consequent sceptical crisis; his pursuit of different disciplines (in Ghazâlî’s case especially *kalâm*, philosophy, and *şûfism*); his study of different sects within these disciplines as well as of different religious sects; his disappointment with most of these sects and with most of the disciplines as they were practiced in his time; and his final satisfaction with a discipline (for Ghazâlî, *şûfism*) that could overcome his scepticism and show him the path to a knowledge that would bring him close to God. Ghazâlî, like Galen and Ibn al-Haitham, describes the books he has written on all of these sects and disciplines; like Galen especially, he has made a habit of writing refutations of the errors of every sect he encountered, in order to warn his readers away from them. Ghazâlî stresses that we must refute each sect on grounds that its own followers will accept, and that to do this we must be able to expound their views at least as well as they can: notoriously, Ghazâlî wrote a refutation of the divinity of Christ based on the Gospels, and an exposition of philosophy that was accepted by Jews and Christians as an authoritative statement of the Avicennian standpoint (the only writer I can think of who has done something similar is Galen, in the *Outline of Empiricism*). In the *Deliverance from Error*, he is chiefly concerned to refute the philosophers and

the Ismâ'îlîs,²¹ and indeed at the end of the *Deliverance from Error*, Ghazâlî sums up the content of the book as “criticism of the faults of philosophy and of [Ismâ'îlî] authoritative instruction and the faults of those who oppose them without using their methods” (Watt 85, MR 82). Nor is it merely as a means to refutation that one must learn the methods of the different sects and disciplines; like Galen, he thinks that wisdom requires mastering many disciplines, and like Galen he refuses to identify himself with any sect among them, but insists on passing his own judgment on what is true and what is false within the claims of each group. However (as Galen argues in *On the Best Kind of Teaching*),²² it is not enough simply to learn the arguments on both sides and then make up one’s own mind. We also need a criterion by which to judge, and we cannot simply accept a criterion offered by any of the contending parties; unless our natural faculties of sensation and reason are fundamentally sound and can be applied reliably, no amount of study will give us certain knowledge.

This is where Ghazâlî’s self-presentation draws most deeply on Galen’s. His intellectual autobiography is centered, not just on his unquenchable curiosity about the teachings of different groups, his refusal to accept their claims on authority, and his insistence on judging for himself, but on his search for and discovery of a criterion of truth and his application of it to judge the different sects and disciplines. He presents his sceptical crisis as the result, not simply of his discovery that his beliefs, like those of the Jews and Christians, had been based on *taqlîd*, but also on his examination of the different possible criteria that might resolve his *aporia*; this led him to conclude that neither sensation nor reason were reliable sources of knowledge, and thus that no certainty at all was possible. By showing that he has gone to the very roots of our beliefs, that he has stripped away all our layers of habitual assent and has examined and for a time rejected even the most fundamental, Ghazâlî hopes to persuade us that, when he does regain confidence in his faculties of sensation and reason and finds rules for applying them (although, like Galen, he never tells us in any substantive way what those rules are), then he is not in any hidden *taqlîd*, but is assenting only where he has established a reliable source of knowledge. Ghazâlî, like Galen, is doing this to establish himself as an authority whom we may safely trust if we do not have the strength of mind and will to go through the whole process ourselves. But Ghazâlî also has more specific aims. He wants to show, against Ismâ'îlî sceptical arguments, that it is possible to have knowledge, based on a reliable criterion, without resorting to *taqlîd* on the *imâm* (and that the content of this knowledge, in religious matters, will support sunnî religious practice, including keeping external peace with the caliph and with the broad Muslim community). He also wants to show, against his more traditional sunnî critics, that he himself has been able to study philosophy, and to use its concepts and methods and accept some of its conclusions, without falling into *taqlîd* on the philosophers (which Ghazâlî thinks is what

happens to most people who study philosophy, Watt 33, MR 38), and so without accepting their infidel doctrines; even if we do not understand the details, we should accept that Ghazâlî has been able to sort out the true from the false in the teachings of the philosophers, and we should not think that the content of his Islam has been compromised when he speaks in ways that sound suspiciously like the philosophers. Finally Ghazâlî wants to show, against the philosophers (and I think more specifically against the comments of Galen and Râzî that I have cited here) that it is possible to be a Muslim without being a *muqallid*, because the prophets have a reliable source of knowledge, analogous but superior to sensation and reason, whose superior authority the philosophers are bound to acknowledge by the same methods that they use to establish their own authority; and Ghazâlî wants to show that this same prophetic source of knowledge is also possessed (not, say, by the Ismâ'îlî *imâm*, or by anyone else who disregards normal Muslim religious practice, but) by the *şûfis*, and notably by Ghazâlî himself.

The overall strategy of the *Deliverance from Error* is brilliant and intricate, and impossible to present in brief compass without oversimplification. But I will select some aspects of how Ghazâlî's self-presentation helps him achieve his aims in the book, and I will note some ways that he seems to be drawing on or adapting Galen.

One way in which Ghazâlî's self-presentation is more complicated than Galen's is that there are two different levels of criteria that he wants to present himself as possessing. A human cognitive faculty can be called a criterion, as can a rule for applying it, and Ghazâlî, like Galen, thinks that sensation and reason (as faculties) are valid criteria, and that the demonstrative method is a valid criterion (as a rule for applying the faculty of reason). And Ghazâlî, like Galen, makes much of his claim to possess the demonstrative method, both as a way for finding demonstrations himself, and as a way for testing whether other people's arguments are demonstrations or not. But Ghazâlî also claims, unlike Galen, that there is a cognitive faculty superior to reason – the prophetic power – and that he himself possesses this power in some degree. Some of the claims of the *Deliverance from Error* turn only on the rational criterion, some on the supra-rational criterion, but Ghazâlî's encounter with Galen is important for both. So I will say something first about the sceptical crisis, then about the demonstrative method, then about the prophetic power.

As I have said, Ghazâlî presents his sceptical crisis as resulting, first from a recognition of *taqlîd*, then from a critical examination of his possible sources of certainty – namely, sensation and reason. Scepticism arises not just from a critique of dogmatic theses, but from a critique of our faculties; Ghazâlî, like Galen (notably in *Errors of the Soul* c6 and *On the Best Kind of Teaching*, concerned with such sceptical critiques) presents sensation and reason as separate and analogous powers, each with its own domain of primitively intuited truths (in the case of reason, these would be “necessary truths”

such as the principle of non-contradiction or that $10 > 3$, Watt 23, MR 28). Ghazâlî's critique of sensation is nothing unusual, but his critique of reason is quite distinctive. The distinctive critique of reason, and also the distinctive standard of certainty that he tests our faculties against, are (as we will see) both designed to highlight features of Ghazâlî's response to the sceptical challenge.

Ghazâlî tests our faculties, or the particular truths that we perceive by them, by what I will call the serpent-test for certainty. The test is fundamentally psychological: the knowledge Ghazâlî is looking for must be certain, that is, we must be so certain of it that once we possess it we cannot be induced to doubt or deny it. "For if I know that ten is greater than three, then if someone said to me, 'No, three is greater, by the sign [*dalîl*] that I shall transform this rod into a serpent,' and if he did transform it and I witnessed him doing so, then I would not for this reason doubt my knowledge: nothing would happen in me except wonderment about how he could do this, but not doubt about what I knew" (Watt 22, MR p.26). So Ghazâlî asks what knowledge he has that would pass this serpent-test, as " $10 > 3$ " initially seems to; he finds that the only candidates are sense-perceptions and necessary truths of reason, and he then argues that neither of these really passes the test. The serpent-test is apparently original to Ghazâlî, and is especially designed to eliminate all the "knowledge" that Jews and Christians and Muslims ordinarily have from *taqlîd* on their prophets, who establish their status as authorized messengers from God by performing "evidentiary miracles," such as turning a rod into a serpent in the case of Moses, or raising a man from the dead in the case of Jesus. For if I believe the doctrines of my religious community simply on the strength of an evidentiary miracle (even in the strongest case, where I have witnessed the miracle myself), then I can also be brought to accept the contrary beliefs by a more powerful miracle.²³ By contrast, if my confidence were based not on *taqlîd* but on my own exercise of sensation or rational intuition, it cannot be overturned by *taqlîd* on someone else, no matter what miracles he performs. However, there is still a question whether my sensory or rational judgments can be overturned, not by an external authority, but by a higher "judge" internal to me, who could overrule them as the stronger miracle-worker overrules the weaker. And Ghazâlî argues that our confidence in sensation can indeed be overturned, like our earlier confidence in matters of *taqlîd*: for, just as we know that *taqlîd* sometimes deceives, we know that sensation can deceive, from all the standard cases (such as the size of the sun) where sensation leads us astray and must be corrected by reason. In such cases, "the sense-judge passes judgment, but the reason-judge accuses him of falsehood and deceit, with an accusation against which there is no defense" (Watt 23, MR 27–8). Ghazâlî's talk of judges [*hâkim*] is reminiscent of Galen, who in the *Errors of the Soul* speaks indifferently of the difficulty of finding a judge [*kritês*] or a *kritêrion* of truth that will not require another judge or criterion to

confirm its correctness (*Errors* c4, SM I,61, cited earlier). And just this is Ghazâlî's problem. We have found that a judge within us, sensation, like the judges outside us, can turn out to lead us astray in judgments that seemed unproblematic. So why should we have any more confidence in the higher judge, reason?

As Ghazâlî puts it, sensation can complain, "You used to trust in me, and then the reason-judge came and accused me of falsehood; if it were not for the reason-judge you would have continued to hold me true. Perhaps beyond the perceptions of reason there is another judge, who if he appears will accuse reason of falsehood in its judging, as the reason-judge appeared and accused sensation of falsehood in its judging. That this perception has not appeared is no sign that it is impossible" (Watt 24, MR 28). And, as Ghazâlî's aggrieved sense-faculty further points out, when we are dreaming we make judgments that seem solid, but that when we awake we recognize as false and as mere imaginings; so why should there not be some further cognitive state that is to waking as waking is to dreaming? From the perspective of that higher state, the judgments of reason might be revealed in their turn as mere imaginings. Perhaps the *şûfî hâl* would turn out to be such a state, since the *şûfis* claim to perceive things in that state that seem to contradict the usual judgments of reason. Or perhaps we will find that death is such a state, since a *hadîth* says, "the people are dreaming, and when they die they wake." So death or the *şûfî hâl* might correct the judgments of reason as reason corrects sensation, and might reveal a realm of objects of knowledge beyond the objects of reason, as reason reveals a realm of objects of knowledge beyond the objects of sensation.

Ghazâlî's argument here is recognizably a twist on Greek sceptical arguments about the impossibility of a criterion. In form it strikingly recalls the dialogue of Democritus B125, where sensation, having been overturned by reason, talks back and says that reason has also undermined itself (though on the un-Ghazâlian ground that reason needs the evidence of the senses to give it its starting-points). This fragment of Democritus is preserved only in Galen's *On Medical Experience*, a work that is extant only in Arabic,²⁴ and that Ghazâlî would be likely to have read. But the particular twist that Ghazâlî gives to the argument depends on Islam and specifically on the *şûfî* idea of a supra-rational faculty. And although Ghazâlî backdates this argument to a period before he had discovered *şûfism* (and when he could only guess what a *şûfî hâl* would be like), in fact it comes from his own mature view, not simply of prophetic revelation as superior to philosophy, but of *şûfism* as the master-discipline based on the supra-rational faculty that the *şûfis* share with the prophets. This does not mean that Ghazâlî's mature position is scepticism about reason: he does not believe that the prophetic faculty contradicts the deliverances of reason when reason is operating correctly. But then again, reason does not contradict the deliverances of sensation when sensation is operating correctly. Nonetheless, if we rely on sensation

not correctly guided by reason, we are likely to go astray in the things we think we are learning from sensation, and if we rely on reason not correctly guided by the prophetic faculty, we will be likely to go astray in the things we think we are learning from reason. And because we cannot be sure at any given moment that reason is not thus leading us astray, it follows that reason, although it is a legitimate source of truths, cannot of itself give us the psychological certainty that Ghazâlî has demanded.²⁵ Ghazâlî tells us that, following this argument within himself, he fell into scepticism for two months, until God cured his illness and restored him to confidence in the first truths of reason: he could have knowledge only through this special divine action on his soul, not because without it he was lacking truth, but because without it he was lacking certainty.

It is Galenic to be pushed, by one's awareness of *taqlîd* and of the interminable quarrels between the sects, to scepticism or to the brink of it, and to search for a self-sufficient criterion, from which no appeal can be made to a higher criterion. It is equally Galenic to insist that we can have no rational method for selecting among the conflicting opinions unless our natural cognitive powers are sound, and unless we have confidence in them.²⁶ But, as both Galen and Ghazâlî make clear, simply having confidence in the things that are evident to sense and reason is not enough; we also need rules for applying these powers to acquire knowledge of things that are not immediately evident. Ghazâlî, like Galen, makes much of logic, as taught by Aristotelian philosophers (for Galen, by Aristotelians and also Stoics) and above all as embodied in mathematical practice, as a method for constructing demonstrations, and as the necessary means for applying the power of reason to pass judgment on non-evident things. Galen uses his long and profound study of logic (enabling him to criticize both Peripatetic and Stoic logicians, and to write new and better treatises on the subject himself) to show his superiority to his hopelessly unscientific medical rivals. He particularly enjoys ridiculing the Methodists for their ignorance of proper logical procedure (so especially *De methodo medendi* I), and patronizing the simple-minded but generally harmless Empiricists. But even the Dogmatic or Rationalist doctors, who have pretensions to scientific knowledge of non-evident things, do not study philosophy or in particular logic, and they too fall under the same criticism. Ghazâlî follows much the same procedure in criticizing first the *mutakallimûn* (who have pretensions to a systematic science of substances and accidents, but argue dialectically from common beliefs or from their opponents' assumptions, and so fall short of demonstrative certainty, Watt 28–9, MR 33),²⁷ and then the Muslim critics of philosophy, who have failed to master logic or the other philosophical sciences that are based on logic, and so are unable to understand or properly criticize philosophy. Some of these critics of philosophy actually reject logic as a pagan Greek importation, but whether from deliberate rejection or from incompetence they are unable to discern what is a genuine demonstration and what is not, and so,

in criticizing philosophy, they make fools of themselves by rejecting philosophical doctrines that are in fact demonstrative, and so help to discredit Islam and to raise the credit of pagan philosophy. By contrast, Ghazâlî himself has in three years mastered all of philosophy (despite heavy teaching duties in other fields, Watt 30, MR 34–5), and in particular logic, which is the key to the other philosophical disciplines.

But once armed with this knowledge of logic, Ghazâlî concludes, like Galen, that the philosophers, in many of the disciplines they pursue, have fallen hopelessly short of the ideals of demonstration that they proclaim in their logic and practice in their mathematics.²⁸ “[The logicians] collect the conditions of demonstration, which are known to produce certainty without fail. But when they reach matters of religion [sc. especially in metaphysics/theology], they are unable to meet these conditions, but relax them in the extreme; and sometimes someone who admires logic and sees its clarity, considers logic and supposes that the infidelities attributed to [the philosophers] are supported by demonstrations of this kind, and hastens into infidelity before reaching [a scientific examination of] metaphysics/theology” (Watt 36, MR 41). Someone like this, who studies logic and its successful application in mathematics, and supposes that the other philosophical disciplines are just like mathematics, “becomes an infidel through pure *taqlîd*” (Watt 33, MR 38). Ghazâlî is convinced that the points on which the philosophers contradict Islam are all points where their arguments are non-demonstrative, and he devotes his *Incoherence of the Philosophers* to showing this in detail on the twenty most objectionable points, above all their assertion of the pre-eternity of the world. Now Galen too thinks that the philosophers’ reasonings on these issues (including the pre-eternity or creation-in-time of the world and the immortality of the soul) are not and cannot be demonstrative, and so he suspends judgment on these questions. And indeed it may seem quite obvious to us to say that while Greek logic and mathematics are certain, Aristotelian metaphysics (including the eternity of the world-order and the theory of the movers of the heavens), or any other philosophical claims of similar scope, are much less certain. But as far as I can tell, nobody except Galen and Ghazâlî had actually said this. While the ancient sceptics attack dogmatic physics and metaphysics, they also attack logic and even mathematics with equal gusto; and Ibn Taimiyya in Islam and Gianfrancesco Pico in Christendom were to give religiously motivated (and often acute) attacks on Aristotelian logic, meaning chiefly the *Posterior Analytics* and its methods for producing definitions and demonstrations.

Ghazâlî, then, accepts the notion that Aristotelian logic yields a method of demonstration: this gives him (he claims) an ability to assess without *taqlîd* whether a given argument is demonstrative, which sets him apart both from the followers of the philosophers, who accept the philosophers’ non-demonstrative arguments out of *taqlîd*, and from the anti-philosophers who reject the demonstrative arguments along with the non-demonstrative ones.

Both of these groups try to “recognize the truth by the men and not the men by the truth” (Watt 39, MR 45), and this is all they can do, lacking an intrinsic criterion of arguments. By contrast, Ghazâlî can use the demonstrative method as a criterion, like a moneychanger who can safely “put his hand into the counterfeiter’s purse and draw out the unadulterated gold from among the counterfeit and worthless [coins], since he trusts in his discernment” (Watt 40, MR 45) – very similarly, Galen had said that the demonstrative method should enable anyone who has learned it to recognize whether an argument that someone else puts forward as a demonstration “is such in reality, or, like a counterfeit coin, resembles the genuine article but is in reality worthless” (*On His Own Books* c11, Singer 18, SM II, 116, cited earlier).²⁹ Ghazâlî uses this comparison to defend himself against his Muslim critics who think he should not have been studying philosophy, while also, like Galen, setting himself up as a final authority for all readers except the very few who are competent to exercise an equally critical judgment on the philosophers’ arguments. Indeed, since most people cannot distinguish good from bad arguments, and since many people think they can, Ghazâlî supports “shutting the gate in preventing the masses from reading the books of the people of error, as much as possible” (Watt 40, MR 45); they should rest content with the safe bits that Ghazâlî has extracted.

Ghazâlî frames his criticisms of these two kinds of opponents, in terms of the general program of the *Deliverance from Error*, as “criticism of the faults of philosophy and of [Ismâ‘îlî] authoritative instruction and the faults of those who oppose them without using their methods” (Watt 85, MR 82, cited earlier). He does his best to make it look as if his Muslim critics are anti-intellectuals afraid of engaging with the philosophers’ arguments, “a party of those whose minds have not taken root in the sciences” (Watt 40, MR 45), and that these people wrongly assume, simply because Ghazâlî engages in discussion with the philosophers, that he must have been corrupted by them. In fact, these people had substantive grounds for thinking that Ghazâlî had taken far more from the philosophers than he is willing to admit, and Ghazâlî argues unconvincingly that in many cases where he and the philosophers say the same thing, the philosophers had stolen it from the prophets and şûfis who existed even in Aristotle’s day (Watt 38–9, MR 44), or that Ghazâlî is merely using philosophical terminology to set out şûfî ideas, or that he and the philosophers had come on the same thoughts independently (Watt 40–41, MR 45). A bit further on, Ghazâlî actually argues that the scholar should not let ordinary people observe him taking things from a suspect source, so as not to encourage them to try it themselves (Watt 42–3, MR 47). So it is no surprise that Ghazâlî does not (like Ibn al-Haitham) acknowledge Galen as a source, even while it is precisely Galen’s model that he uses to establish his independence from all earlier authorities.

Nonetheless, Ghazâlî has serious criticisms of the philosophers. He believes, correctly, that many of their alleged demonstrations are not real

demonstrations, and that their methods are incapable of resolving many fundamental questions about God and the world, and he also objects to their practical contempt for Islamic law, resting on their conviction that they understand the higher aims of the law and that its practical details are needed only for the unintellectual masses.³⁰ Ghazâlî thinks that a higher criterion is needed both for thought and for action, and that this can be found only in the prophetic power; and he wants to show that on the philosophers' own grounds, they must admit such a source of knowledge superior to reason.

To understand Ghazâlî's strategy here, it helps to understand something more of what he is arguing *for* in the *Deliverance from Error* – and not just the philosophical and Ismâ'îlî doctrines and practices that he is arguing *against*. And this turns partly on Ghazâlî's personal history, and on his apologetic burden. As I have said, the caliph (or the real power, Nizâm al-Mulk) had commissioned Ghazâlî to refute the Ismâ'îlîs because the Ismâ'îlîs were a revolutionary threat to the state; the Ismâ'îlîs' ideological appeal was based in part on their sceptical arguments against sunnî jurisprudence, designed to show that an infallible inspired leader was necessary, as well as on their promise to reveal a deeper inner meaning of the law, and Ghazâlî's commission was to undermine that appeal. So Ghazâlî set to work refuting Ismâ'îlî sceptical arguments, showing how to give a criterion (his word is *mîzân*, a balance or weighing device) for practical-legal judgments, and, using Ismâ'îlî methods against the Ismâ'îlîs, showing that the Ismâ'îlîs, like the sunnîs, needed such a practical criterion to apply the teachings of their infallible instructor to the particular case at hand. Ghazâlî, in the *Deliverance from Error*, continues to feel that his public teaching and arguing against the Ismâ'îlîs were intellectually correct, and yet he is now deeply dissatisfied with them. He speaks (in terms partly borrowed from the early sûfî Hâarith Muḥâsibî) of a conviction of sin and a spiritual crisis that forced him, for the sake of his own salvation, to leave his teaching position in Baghdâd and to set off on a pilgrimage and to follow the sûfî path of austerities and contemplation; one of his announced goals in the *Deliverance from Error* is to explain why he left, and also why he now feels it is legitimate for him to return to teaching and debate. While Ghazâlî does not say explicitly what sort of sin he felt himself to be involved in, the answer becomes clear from a passage of his little treatise *The Beginning of Guidance* (translated by Watt in the same volume with the *Deliverance from Error*). He is there warning us against eating unlawful food. Food is unlawful, not only if it contains pork or wine or the like, but also if it is purchased with unlawfully obtained money, and this includes money given by someone else who had obtained it unlawfully; and we must abstain from living off of money given by someone, even if we do not know that he obtained these particular gold pieces unlawfully, if his main sources of income are unlawful: this includes "the property of the ruler and his deputies, and the property of those who have no means of

livelihood except mourning for the dead or selling wine or practicing usury or playing flutes or other instruments of pleasure" (Watt 139).³¹ Stepping outside of the particular Islamic legal context, we can say that Ghazâlî feels that he has been coopted by the state; even if sunnî legal practice is correct, Ghazâlî is being paid to argue on its behalf, not because it is correct, but because it supports obedience to the state, a state that does not value religion or morality except as a means to an end; this attitude is precisely why the masses have a desire for something more, so that they are tempted to turn to Ismâ'îlism. Ghazâlî tries to distinguish his current program of teaching, after his şûfî retreat, from his old state-sponsored teaching, in that now, besides simply refuting the Ismâ'îlî arguments against sunnî jurisprudence, he will provide a positive şûfî alternative. That is: the şûfis, like the Ismâ'îlîs, promise to show you the inner meanings of legally prescribed acts, and performing the acts with knowledge of their inner meaning is supposed to be spiritually beneficial, a step toward the vision of God; but there is no benefit if you do not actually perform the acts as outwardly prescribed. This şûfî program gives Ghazâlî something positive to promise as he argues on behalf of sunnî practice against Ismâ'îlî subversion and philosophical indifference.

This background to Ghazâlî's defence of prophecy helps to explain his particular conception of what prophecy is supposed to be. When Ghazâlî defends prophecy, and specifically the prophethood of Muḥammad, he is defending not so much the Qur'ân (which most of his opponents accept, subject to their own interpretations) as the *ḥadîth* (the sayings of Muḥammad rather than the words of God revealed to Muḥammad), which are supposed to give guidelines in interpreting the Qur'ân and specifically in deriving a comprehensive legal system from it. The prophet's authority rests on his special expertise, and this is not so much a matter of God's telling him (or of his somehow intuiting) the answers to theoretical questions that reason leaves open (such as, perhaps, immortality or creation-in-time) as of his knowledge of what laws (rituals, taboos, and so on) will be most beneficial as a means toward spiritual purification and ultimately a vision of God. Here, Ghazâlî is not so far from the Islamic philosophers' conception of prophecy, except that the philosophers think that philosophy contains all the knowledge that the prophet (by external prescriptions and imaginative descriptions of spiritual realities) is helping the masses toward, so that the philosopher himself has nothing more to learn and no need to be guided by the prophet. By contrast, Ghazâlî wants to show that the prophetic ability, which ordains sunnî religious practice, is as superior to reason as reason is to sensation: so that the philosopher must give up his claim to knowing *a priori* the purposes of the law, and must follow the external law without initially knowing why, in the hope that he will eventually reap the gains in spiritual understanding that are the law's ultimate justification. Ghazâlî thus conceives the prophet's knowledge as something analogous to the şûfî's

knowledge of the inner meaning and justification of religious acts. Indeed, “[the ṣūfīs’] every movement and rest, external or internal, is kindled from the light of the lamp of prophecy, and beyond the light of prophecy there is no light on the face of the earth from which we may be illumined” (Watt 60, MR 62). This does not mean that the ṣūfīs are prophets – Muḥammad is the final prophet – but that their knowledge and the prophet’s knowledge come from the same source or power, and that the difference is one of degree. So in establishing the prophetic ability as the supreme cognitive power, Ghazālī intends to justify not only the authority of Muḥammad (and of sunnism, based on the *ḥadīth*), but also the authority of the ṣūfīs, and of Ghazālī himself, as knowers of the inner meaning of the law. And Ghazālī hopes that while his readers will of course not become prophets, at least some of them will be able to experience in themselves lesser degrees of the prophetic ability, and he thinks that such a “taste” of prophecy gives us our only basis for recognizing the full-grown prophethood of Muḥammad on anything more than *taqlīd*.

Beyond arguing to undermine our confidence that reason must be the highest cognitive power, Ghazālī gives two kinds of positive arguments: first to show that prophecy exists (that is, that there have been some prophets or other), and then specifically to show that Muḥammad is a prophet. Both arguments seem to draw on ideas from Galen, and seem to be designed to go Galen one better.

The argument for the existence of prophecy is very brief, and has struck most readers as utterly mystifying, but we can shed some light on it by comparison with Galen. For here, as so often, Ghazālī refers to something we are supposed to have learned by studying medicine. “The proof of its [prophecy’s] existence is the existence of cognitions in the world which could not conceivably be given by reason, like the sciences of medicine and of the stars: for whoever investigates these necessarily knows that they are not perceived except by divine inspiration and through God’s help (be He exalted!), and there is no path to them by experience [*tajriba* = *empeiria*]. There are some conditions [*ahkām*] of the stars which occur only once in every thousand years – how can these be given by experience? – and likewise the properties of drugs. This demonstration makes clear the possibility of the existence of a path to the perception of those things that reason does not perceive” (Watt 65–6, MR 67); Ghazālī goes on to say that we have a model for this aspect of prophecy in what we perceive in our dreams. While I am not sure I understand the astronomical or astrological argument, the medical argument is referring to a specific problem. Ghazālī’s text seems to vacillate between saying that *experience* could not discover these properties and that *reason* could not, and indeed he means to say both. This comes from a Greek dispute between rationalist doctors and empiricist doctors. Galen concedes to the empiricists that they and the rationalists will prescribe the same treatments, and this seems to imply that the rationalists’

added knowledge of natures and causes makes no practical difference. But, Galen says, if we were all empiricists, many of the treatments would never have been discovered in the first place. The empiricists would like to say that the now standard treatments were first discovered by trial and error: this cure for this condition was first tried purely at random, or to satisfy a craving, or by analogy to a cure for a similar condition, but now that the cure has been observed to work, the doctor will prescribe it on the basis of experience. However, there are cases, particularly involving so-called compound drugs where the ingredients (often rather exotic) must be mixed in fixed proportions, in which it seems extremely unlikely that the treatment would be discovered by trial and error without the guidance of some causal theory of the powers of drugs. In such cases, the empiricists say (according to Galen *De methodo medendi* III, Kuehn 10,164), not that the first person to try the treatment was guided by some rationalist theory, but rather that it came to him in a dream. This is not simply a colorful way of saying that it was a random guess, nor does it come from a secular psychological theory of dreams. Rather, they are thinking of the common Greek practice of praying to a god to send in a dream directions for relief from an illness (where the dream is often to be received while incubating in a temple of the god): the dream-instructions might be purely ritual, but often they include detailed prescriptions analogous to (and surely somehow modelled on) the kinds of prescriptions that a human doctor would give. The empiricists, faced with cases where it is hard to maintain that trial and error would give rise to the actual result, but unpersuaded that rationalist causal theories would fare any better, project this current religious-medical practice historically back onto the origins of medicine, and conclude that many of the cognitions that make up the science of medicine, although they have their scientific status confirmed by experience, have their origin in some kind of divine inspiration.

This is what Ghazâlî means when he speaks of properties of drugs that could not have been initially discovered either by experience or by reason, but must have been discovered by divine inspiration and by a prophetic power analogous to what we can possess in dreaming. Ghazâlî relies on the assumption that God does indeed inspire some dreams, and that this is the most widely given form of personal communication from God³²; Galen of course accepts this assumption too, and thinks that he himself has been favored with divinely-sent dreams, and he seems willing in some texts to grant that particular individuals' medical knowledge, and perhaps even the art of medicine as such, owe their origin to divine inspiration.³³ But Ghazâlî argues that once the doctors admit that their practice goes back to some prophet's knowledge of the properties of drugs, they should be equally willing to admit that the practices of the religious communities go back to an analogous prophetic knowledge of the properties of ritual acts (Watt 69–70, MR 71–2).³⁴ We cannot give any rational explanation of why these medical

treatments should succeed, but if we experience that they do succeed, we should credit the prophetic power of their inventor; likewise, although we cannot give any rational explanation as to why the rituals should succeed, if we experience that they do succeed, we should grant that the founder of the religious community had prophetic knowledge.³⁵ Although prophetic knowledge of ritual is analogous to prophetic knowledge of drugs, it is a higher knowledge because “the prophets are doctors of the diseases of hearts” (Watt 70, MR 72, “heart” meaning something like “spirit,” as in the *ṣūfī* claim to an *‘ilm al-qulūb*). Ghazālī is here echoing the claim, a commonplace of Greek philosophy, that there is a medicine of the soul analogous but superior to the medicine of the body. But there is a sharp edge: Galen, and especially Rāzī, had claimed that they themselves were doctors of the soul as well as of the body, and Ghazālī, while conceding their claim to be good doctors of the body, is trying to force them to admit that there is a prophetic medicine of the soul superior to any knowledge that they themselves possess; and Ghazālī wants to claim this superior knowledge for Muḥammad, and also for the *ṣūfīs* including himself.³⁶

What we have seen is the argument that there have been some prophets in the world. The knowledge that Muḥammad is a prophet depends on knowing that the prescriptions he has given do in fact succeed. What they are supposed to succeed at is “the purification of hearts” (Watt 67, MR 69; rather than, say, external successes that God might bestow on an individual or the community for good religious behavior), and the only way to test whether Muḥammad’s prescription succeeds is to live a life according to the *sunnā* and the *ḥadīth* (the example and sayings of Muḥammad), and to see whether we reap the spiritual benefits promised by various *ḥadīths*. Of course, many people live in external conformity to *sunnī* law without any remarkable spiritual results, and what Ghazālī is recommending is not simply external performance. Rather, he is saying that we should pursue both the external *sunnī* practice and a *sunnī-ṣūfī* meditation on the inner meaning of the outward actions, with a correct inner disposition to accompany the actions, and only in this way will we get the spiritual rewards that the philosophers claim to give us without relying on religious law, and that the *Ismā‘īlīs* claim to give by revealing an inner meaning of the law that contradicts rather than deepening the outward *sunnī* practice.

Ghazālī urges us to “seek certainty about prophecy by this path, not from [the prophet’s] changing a rod into a serpent or splitting the moon” (Watt 67, MR 69), since such a miracle might have come from magic or from God’s leading into error; and so any certainty based on serpent-changing might be overturned. This is the only place in the *Deliverance from Error* where Ghazālī takes up the serpent-test for certainty from the beginning, and this is what he had put the serpent-test there for in the first place. Ghazālī is claiming that we can have a different kind of certainty about the prophet’s ability, not based on inference from miracles, and that this kind of certainty will not

be *taqlîd* and will not be overthrown when *taqlîd* is overthrown. This higher kind of certainty comes from studying the prophet's sunna and testing his prescriptions, and to the extent that we reap spiritual benefit from these prescriptions, we will also come to a knowledge of their inner meaning and purpose, so that we will have for ourselves a lesser degree of the prophetic ability, which we can use to recognize the true expert, not by mere *taqlîd* but by a competent assessment of his qualities. And Ghazâlî's model here is the one that his opponents will be compelled to accept – namely, Galen's model – as we have seen it earlier, for how his contemporaries and his later readers should come to recognize his authority in medicine.

If doubt befalls you about whether a given individual is a prophet or not, certainty will not come except by knowledge of his qualities [*aḥwâl*], either by eyewitnessing or by transmission and report. For if you know medicine and jurisprudence, you can recognize jurists and doctors by witnessing their qualities, or by hearing their doctrines even if you cannot witness them. So you are not incapable of knowing that Shâfi'î (may God have mercy on him!) is a jurist and that Galen is a doctor, by true knowledge, not by *taqlîd* on someone else but by your knowing something of jurisprudence and medicine and reading their books and compositions; and so there comes to you a necessary knowledge of their quality. And likewise if you understand the meaning of prophecy, and study constantly the Qur'ân and traditions, there will come to you a necessary knowledge that [Muḥammad] (may God incline to him and give him peace!) is in the highest of the degrees of prophecy – confirm this by experience [*tajriba* = *empeiria*] of what he says about acts of worship and their effect on the purification of hearts! (Watt 66–7, MR 68–9)

This passage is the only reference to Galen by name in the *Deliverance from Error*, and it might look like a throwaway, but it is not: this is the conclusion that Ghazâlî has been building up to – namely, that the means Galen uses to validate his authority in medicine, by showing those who can the path to repeat his insights, and by displaying to the others the records of his character and his proved medical successes – that these means also validate the higher authority of the prophetic sunna as Ghazâlî has systematized it, and the authority of Ghazâlî himself who can do this based on his demonstrative method, his sunnî practice, and his ṣūfî experiences.³⁷ And so the *Deliverance from Error* serves to introduce and give authority to the many other books of Ghazâlî that it describes, just as Galen's descriptions of his philosophical studies, scientific method, and medical experience in *On His Own Books* and *On the Order of His Own Books* introduce and give authority to the many books that present the fruits of his studies.

III. Renaissance Christian Authors and the Practice of Galenic Autobiography

We have seen from Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî that Galen's self-description, as presented especially in *On His Own Books* and *On the Order of His Own*

Books, was recognized as one available model for medieval authors' own autobiographical self-presentations. Both Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî, reading Galen, could recognize their own lives in him, and Ibn al-Haitham is particularly frank about admitting it. And they also saw, in Galen's presentation of his dissatisfaction with the existing disciplines and his search for and discovery and application of a criterion or demonstrative method, a model for how they could establish their own credentials, as writers independent of authority and as authorities in their own right. There was surely a broad range of things that a medieval author could do with Galen. Ibn al-Haitham adheres closely to Galen's autobibliographical form, Ghazâlî more loosely. And the content that the Galenic self-presentation is used to justify might be more or less Galenic. Even Ibn al-Haitham, who cites Galen by name as his model, is much more of an Aristotelian than Galen was (though presumably his enormous medical work *On the Constitution of the Art of Medicine* was thoroughly Galenic), but Ibn al-Haitham can recognize himself in, and justify himself by, Galen's life in a way that he could not by, say, the ancient lives of Aristotle (of which at least one, attributed to Ptolemy al-Ghârib, was available in Arabic). And although Ghazâlî strongly disapproves of Galen's scepticism about immortality and his rejection of the prophetic religions (while accepting Galen as a great doctor and student of the wonders of nature), and although the *Deliverance from Error* is at one level an argument against Galen, nonetheless Ghazâlî genuinely admires Galen's example of a life without *taqlîd*; he recognizes himself in Galen, and he tries to live up to Galen's model, trying to investigate the different disciplines and sects as Galen had, and to proceed by demonstration as Galen had, and to show by his own example that one can be Muslim without being *muqallid*. Galen's autobiography thus gives him an important positive model, both for how he presents himself to himself and for how he presents himself to others; by contrast, Avicenna's autobiography (which Ghazâlî knew, and cites disapprovingly, Watt 73, MR 74), which is unrelieved boasting about his mastery of the different sciences, with no scepticism and no conflicting arguments that reason must overcome, could give Ghazâlî no model and do nothing to endear him to his readers. Of course, Ghazâlî is trying to out-Galen Galen, to show that there is a higher prophetic-şûfî medicine of souls that a Galenist ought by his own standards to acknowledge. But Galen has always called forth such attempts to outbid him. As Owsei Temkin puts it, much of Galen's work was to create an ideal, Galenism, whether Galen himself could live up to it or not³⁸; and Galenism included the possibility of criticizing Galen by the standards of his own ideal. Thus Râzî starts his *Doubts against Galen* by considering the reproach that he should not be attacking such a great philosopher, and one to whom he owes more than to any other man, and Râzî replies by citing as his model Galen, who wrote criticisms of many of his great predecessors, and who condemns teachers who demand blind acceptance of their teachings. Galen would have wanted us to continue this

process by criticizing Galen, and, Râzî says, it is not impossible for us to make further progress beyond him.

Not only medieval Muslim authors, but also Renaissance Christian authors, in various ways appropriate Galen's self-presentation. Is there a line of influence from the Muslim to the Christian authors? Not one that I have been able to trace, and quite possibly there is none; the Muslim and the Christian phenomenon may be two independent growths from the same ancient root. But this does not mean that the Muslim texts are of no help in studying the Christian ones. The Muslim texts can alert us – certainly, they alerted me – to the existence of the Galenic autobiographical genre, which we can now look for elsewhere, and they can get us used to the idea that people can borrow crucial elements of their autobiographies, even of autobiographies that stress the author's intellectual independence and personal discoveries.

There is no doubt whatever that many Renaissance writers were aware of Galen's autobiography – both in the autobibliographies and in scattered autobiographical discussions in the other treatises – and that they considered Galen as one possible model for their own self-descriptions. I have discussed Descartes and Campanella, neither of whom explicitly cite Galen as a model (although Campanella does discuss his reading of Galen, and Campanella's title *De libris propriis et de recta ratione studendi syntagma* seems to recall the titles of Galen's autobibliographies). But, for example, Cardano in the preface to his *De vita propria* mentions Galen as one possible model for autobiography, though he announces that he will follow Marcus Aurelius instead; this shows both that Galenic autobiography was available as one possible form, and that people saw nothing wrong with the idea of an autobiography modelled on someone else's (and Cardano follows Galen in writing a separate *De libris propriis*, besides including an autobibliographical chapter in the *De vita propria*). I know of several other Renaissance autobiographical texts that seem to be modelled to one extent or another on Galen.³⁹ And it is important, for getting a context for thinking about the *Discourse on the Method*, that there were such texts, because it is hard to imagine Descartes' modelling himself directly on Galen without any more contemporary context. But I suspect that I do not know most of the relevant texts. And I suspect that this is because the Western tradition here will be rather different from the Muslim tradition, since Westerners tend to think of Galen chiefly as a model doctor, while Muslims often think of him as a model all-round intellectual, a philosopher and logician as much as a doctor – which is, of course, how Galen wants you to think of him. For this reason, I suspect that Western Galenizing autobiographical texts will be more often by people with technical medical training, who will have read a great deal of Galen, and who would be likely to turn to Galen's autobibliographies as guides to the vast amounts of Galen they would have to read. Unfortunately, I am out of my depth in Renaissance medicine, and will have to appeal to

my readers for suggestions about writers who may help to fill out the picture of the tradition I am sketching.⁴⁰ But Campanella, who was not a doctor but simply an omnivorous reader and polymath, is also clearly influenced by Galen's self-presentation, and all the points of contact that I noted earlier between Campanella and Descartes seem to be explained by a common Galenic influence, however this may have been mediated.

I will, however, mention one rather obscure Renaissance text written by a doctor, which may well be typical of many texts that I do not know and would be unlikely to know. This is by Etienne de Clave, and it is the preface to Book II of his treatise on minerals and gems, *Traitez Philosophiques des Pierres et Pierreries* (1635).⁴¹ De Clave starts by giving an apologia for his work: he would not have had the audacity to publish a work so critical of Aristotle if he had not been strengthened by the example of several recent anti-Aristotelian writers (Patrizi, Basso, Campanella, Gassendi, and "Catharina Oliva"),⁴² and had he not reflected that even great thinkers are prone to fall into error, particularly when they are trying to reach a knowledge of things by scholastic forms of reasoning, and lose touch with sense-experience, the touchstone of all our reasoning. De Clave expands on this point, describing the contradictions into which the different disciplines (he stresses astronomy, physics, medicine) have fallen, so that those who teach them "are directly opposed to the truth, and some of them to others, and indeed many to themselves" (192). "These so manifest contradictions of the most learned have often plunged me into great doubts concerning the truth and certainty of the sciences, and especially the natural sciences, which need to have more stable and solid foundations" (ibid.); indeed, "often it would have taken only a little for me to subscribe to the vanity of the human sciences" – that is, to accept the thesis of Cornelius Agrippa, that all human disciplines (as opposed to Christian faith) are vain and uncertain (195). But de Clave's desire to serve humanity stirred him up not to despair, but to travel to seek out the most famous doctors of all lands, in the hope of finding some solidly grounded teaching among them. De Clave was, of course, disappointed. But having returned home as ignorant as before, he reflected on the old maxim that "the doctor begins where the physicist leaves off" (197; the quote is roughly from Aristotle *De Sensu* c1, also *De Juventute* c27), and began to study physics, starting by rereading his Aristotle. And despite the professed anti-Aristotelian orientation of his treatise, De Clave says that it was in Aristotle that he found the key insight that "the only way to understand the composition of things is by [first] resolving [/analyzing] them" (198). This was de Clave's great methodological revelation: "I was seized by such a desire to follow such a true axiom and maxim, as the most luminous and certain torchlight of nature . . . that I began twenty-six years ago to work diligently at this resolution [/analysis], whether of animals, plants, or minerals" (ibid.). At least sometimes, this "resolution" is meant in a very physical sense, as sorting out a physical or chemical mixture into its ingredients: "I came to

discover by means of fermentation the true key which gave me full access to wise Nature's sacred cabinet; which, after long labor, showed me the final resolution of mixtures into their purest and most admirable principles" (199). Evidently de Clave's work contains some preliminary results of this analysis as applied to minerals, but de Clave postpones a full communication of his discoveries to a more favorable time (he hints darkly at some present obstacles) when he will be able to "open the door of the treasure-house which has been barred to our predecessors up to now, to give access to it to all the lovers of truth" (200). As far as I know, de Clave never delivered on this promise.

The formal parallels between this preface and the *Discourse on the Method* are obvious, and Olivier Bloch, in an article entitled "Le discours de la méthode d'Etienne de Clave (1635),"⁴³ has brought them together: both works present themselves as "l'annonce et le programme d'une série de traités scientifiques" and include a "défense du principe de la libre critique envers l'autorité des doctes, et tout particulièrement d'Aristote, charge contre la scolastique et satire de son verbiage obscur, tableau des différentes disciplines et, théologie mise à part, dénonciation de leurs incertitudes et leurs contradictions, désir de leur donner un fondement qui pût à la fois assurer leur solidité et en permettre l'apprentissage systématique, récit d'une expérience à la fois personnelle et épistémologique qui, d'espoirs en déceptions, va de la tentation du doute universel devant l'état des sciences contemporaines à la révélation d'un principe méthodologique qui conduit à prendre pour modèle une science déterminée et à promettre des résultats féconds pour un avenir meilleur, en passant par les voyages et le retour aux sources" (Bloch (1990), 160–61). As Bloch notes, these parallels are purely formal, and the content of de Clave's and Descartes' methodological discoveries are quite different: as Bloch says, de Clave's source is Aristotelian, his master-science is chemistry, his epistemology is empiricist,⁴⁴ and he is in every way a far lesser light than Descartes.

Bloch is not trying to suggest that de Clave was in any way a source for Descartes; rather, he wants the juxtaposition of the two texts and the discovery of their formal parallels to reveal common "schémas et modèles culturels qui organisent également le *Discours de la Méthode* . . . schémas de pensée et schémas de présentation" (161): Bloch suggests that these common patterns go back to the Renaissance humanist and sceptical critique of the established disciplines (which is certainly right), and to "un pastiche des récits d'expérience religieuse ou mystique, initiatique ou occultiste" (ibid.; this I am more dubious about). Bloch also adds that the real originality of the *Discourse* comes out all the more strongly when it is read against the background of these common patterns, and compared with a lesser writer such as de Clave. I agree with almost all of this; what I want to add is that (apart from the stereotyped humanist criticisms of the sciences) almost all the features common to Descartes and de Clave go back to Galen, who must

directly or indirectly be a source for both (as well as for Campanella). We can also add at least two more parallels between Descartes and de Clave – namely, that they are both (like Galen) undertaking to provide the physical foundations of medicine, and that they both (like Galen) represent their basic methodological discovery as some kind of method of analysis, although Descartes' model (like Galen's) is geometrical and de Clave's is chemical. One shared feature that may make Descartes and de Clave a bit different from Galen (but close to other Renaissance Christian writers) is their need to justify why they are deviating from the inherited teaching of Aristotle, and also to reassure their readers that in repudiating scholastic philosophy, they will not do any harm to the Christian orthodoxy that that philosophy had been used to support. De Clave, as a practically trained doctor and scientist rising to philosophical ambitions, is just the sort of person that I would expect (in the West, as opposed to the Muslim world) to follow Galen's self-presentation. But this description applies, up to a point, to Descartes too – not to Descartes as he ultimately appears in the *Meditations* and the *Principles*, but to the Descartes of the 1630s.

Much of what would strike Descartes' first readers as most novel in the *Discourse* would be the medical-physiological discussion in *Discourse* Part Five, especially the circulation of the blood. And in Part Six, Descartes hopes that "in place of this speculative philosophy which is taught in the schools, one could find a practical one" (AT VI,61–2) by applying his physics to master the powers of nature, partly for constructing useful machines but "principally for the preservation of health, which is without doubt the first good and the foundation of all the other goods of this life" (AT VI,62); and it seems to be above all a medical research program for which he is appealing for support (please send money for experiments, AT VI,73). Certainly Descartes had become deeply involved in medicine in working out the details of human physiology, and especially his theory of vision, and much of the physiology of the *Traité de l'Homme* reads like a mechanized version of Galen (much of the work being done by "animal spirits," Galen's *psuchikon pneuma*), though mechanizing Galen is of course a far-from-trivial change. And to the extent that we focus on the medical sections of the *Discourse*, Descartes' epistemology will contrast with de Clave's "empiricism" less starkly than Bloch suggests. It is Galenist, on the one hand to argue against the empiricist doctors that we need a foundation for medicine in physical theory and in the theory and practice of demonstration, while on the other hand ridiculing the school-philosophers who never dare to put their propositions to the test of experiment even where the questions are genuinely testable. But de Clave assumes (like Galen in some contexts) that demonstration must always begin from premisses given by sensation, while Descartes (like Galen elsewhere) believes that reason has its own primitive objects which it can grasp on its own. Still, Descartes' emphasis in *Discourse* Part Six is on the need for experiments to determine how

the particular phenomena are derived from these rationally grasped first principles.

So it seems a likely guess that it was through Descartes' involvement in medicine, in working out the theory of vision and writing the *Traité de l'Homme*, that he encountered the Galenic style of autobiographical self-presentation, whether by reading Galen or (more probably) by reading one or more of his Renaissance imitators.⁴⁵ And Descartes seizes on this self-presentation, not because he wanted to tell his life story and needed some style for doing so, but in order to appropriate Galen's strategy of self-justification: Descartes (respectively Galen, Ghazâlî, and so on) is the individual from whom the bonds of *taqlîd* have been loosened, who has thrown out all of his old beliefs and begun afresh, accepting only what he clearly perceives at each stage and working out demonstrations to take him from first principles to testable and practically important results. We should therefore trust him. Descartes, like Galen and Ghazâlî, envisages two classes of readers: there will be a few who can follow the full sequence of his demonstrations, or rather (since Descartes in the *Discourse* is refusing to publish his metaphysics and physics) can work out these demonstrations from first principles on their own, but most readers will have to settle for trusting Descartes, not through pure *taqlîd* but from what they learn of his life and character and from the fruits of his method that he offers in the *Geometry*, *Dioptrics*, and *Meteors* for them to test. Descartes (like Galen and Ghazâlî) is perfectly serious that he does not want all of his readers to imitate him in throwing out all of their opinions and starting again, but he hopes that the few who can succeed in this radical procedure will be inspired to try. And he hopes that by winning over a larger group by his *Essays*, he will create the demand that will allow him to publish his metaphysics and physics (despite the Roman condemnation of Copernicanism), either within his lifetime or at least posthumously, and to create a body of followers for his whole scientific system.

None of this means that Descartes' views are the same as Galen's. The most important differences between the *Discourse* and Galen (or any of the other authors I have discussed) are not in the autobiography or in the absurdly short account of method in Part Two, but in the metaphysics of Part Four and the physics and physiology of Part Five. Of course there are differences in the autobiographical self-presentation too: Descartes takes scepticism much more seriously than Galen (though not more than Ghazâlî), and his provisional ethics in Part Three seems new, due partly to the need to show that he is not religiously or politically radical. But my guess is that the single most important difference between Descartes' self-presentation and Galen's (or Ghazâlî's or Ibn al-Haitham's) is that, where Galen and the others had presented themselves as recapturing the true doctrine and method of ancient models that their epigones had lost, Descartes starts afresh with no reference to ancient texts, and aspires to surpass the ancients. But even this difference is not absolute: Galen too thinks that by recapturing Hippocrates' method,

we can go beyond his results, and Descartes too suggests that the ancient mathematicians had powerful methods that had been forgotten until his own time (so especially in the *Rules*, AT X,376–7), although he thinks he can surpass their results. And I want to emphasize that the difference lies in Descartes' presentation of himself as independent of the ancients, not in any actual independence of ancient models.

At this point, it is worth stepping back to ask ourselves how we feel about the practice of borrowing crucial features of earlier writers' autobiographies. There is undeniably something uncomfortable-making about it. From a twentieth-century point of view, plagiarizing your autobiography is about as low as you can stoop. You may remember the case of Joe Biden, an American politician and still Senator from Delaware, who ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1988. He was forced to withdraw from the race, under a wave of public ridicule, when it became known that a heavily autobiographical stump speech he had been giving had been taken almost word-for-word from a speech of Neil Kinnock's, the Labour Party leader in the U.K., substituting the name "Biden" for "Kinnock" where necessary. (The "generations and generations of Kinnocks" before the speaker who had never gone to university became generations and generations of Bidens, and so on. One of Biden's campaign workers told The New York Times about watching Biden watch the video of Kinnock's speech over and over again, apparently mesmerized, involuntarily mimicking Kinnock's hand-gestures.) Now, clearly, in the context of their own times, what Ibn al-Haitham and Ghazâlî and Campanella and de Clave and Descartes were doing was not plagiarism. Ibn al-Haitham explicitly draws the parallels to Galen, with pride and not with shame, and Cardano's discussion of different possible models in the prologue to his *De vita propria* shows that it was perfectly acceptable to have a model for your autobiography, indeed that writing *without* an ancient model could be considered suspicious. Since Descartes offers his own life as a model for his readers to imitate if they approve (AT VI,4), he can hardly think it is improper to take what someone else says about his own life as a model for conceiving one's own.

From some points of view, this stylization of medieval and Renaissance autobiographies means that they were not really autobiographies. I am thinking particularly of an article by Josef van Ess arguing that the *Deliverance from Error* is not an autobiography.⁴⁶ Van Ess thinks that Ghazâlî the autobiographer is an invention of nineteenth-century European orientalists, who, convinced that Islam in their own day was frozen in *taqlîd*, saw Ghazâlî as the better way Islam could have gone, the "free individual revealing his soul" in the *Deliverance from Error*; and van Ess has no trouble in pointing out various conventional and apologetic elements in the text that show that Ghazâlî is not simply "revealing his soul" (and since van Ess does not notice the Galen connection, I am to that extent strengthening his case). Van Ess seems almost to be arguing that there are no autobiographies in Islam, and that this

is a Western notion inappropriately foisted on the Islamic texts. Now I have no wish to involve myself in the political issues about orientalism, and in the end I do not much care whether Ghazâlî's text is called an autobiography or not. I would simply say that if Islamic "autobiographies" such as Ghazâlî's and Ibn al-Haitham's are not really autobiographies, then a lot of Western "autobiographies" are not really autobiographies either. Autobiographies do not happen simply by some individual's spontaneously pouring out his soul. That there should be autobiographies at all is not automatic, and it takes a special effort, on the part of individuals and of a whole literary tradition, for them to become something more than self-defense speeches or *curricula vitae*. Where a literary tradition of autobiography exists, individuals who choose to make use of it to describe their own lives will to some extent stylize their self-descriptions, fitting their own lives (with appropriate changes) into descriptions that once belonged to other people; and anyone who writes an autobiography does so with some purpose, and will use both the raw facts of his life and the heritage of the literary tradition as materials for that purpose.

All this is only to be expected. Nonetheless, there remains something disturbing, or perhaps several different disturbing elements, about this sort of study of the history of autobiography. I cannot entirely resolve the difficulties, but I will offer some concluding reflections that may be of some use. The first difficulty is simply to know how much of what our authors say about their lives to believe: how far do the stylization or the apologetic programs of these works stop them from being historically accurate? (We might compare the problem in medical history, where, for example, Byzantine descriptions of plagues, which at first sight look promising for the medical historian, turn out to be useless, since the authors simply copy the symptoms from Thucydides.) Unfortunately, here I have nothing in particular to suggest, and where we do not have other biographical sources for our authors, we have to resign ourselves to not knowing. Someone may stylize his self-description simply by the way he selects which events in his life are worth telling, or the way he retrospectively conceives those events ("sceptical crisis" vs. "nervous breakdown," and so on), rather than by actually falsifying, and people actually live more-or-less stylized lives. On the other hand, when we read Galen or Descartes, we are not in the least tempted to believe their claims to have discovered a mathematically certain scientific system, and it is worth questioning why we should feel so much more cheated if something they say that is more strictly autobiographical turns out to be false. Perhaps it is because we read autobiographies looking for the personality of the author, and feel cheated if what we thought was part of this personality turns out to have been borrowed; but the authors were not writing in order to convey their personality, and cannot be held responsible for this. Perhaps the problem is more specifically with the Galenic type of autobiography, since one of the authors' main aims in writing is to persuade us that they are

independent thinkers who have rethought everything from the beginning, and indeed the texts are, on a first reading, often very good at persuading us of this. So it is disconcerting when so much, including the very description of one's own independence, turns out to be borrowed.

But independence is a matter of degree. Galen and Ghazâlî and Descartes are strong-minded individuals who are creating something new, and not just reproducing the thoughts of some previous thinker, but (whether they are aware of it or not) they are indebted to their predecessors and contemporaries for many starting-points of their thought, and there is no reason why their ideal of independence should not be one of those starting-points. So perhaps our problem is that, being unable to accept their scientific claims, and trying to save something from the wreck, we fall back on something subjective, their personality or their method, and we want their first-person reports about this to be solid. (And yet, it seems to me, Galen's or Descartes' reports about the methods they followed are much less likely to be true than their first-order scientific claims. We approve of them perhaps especially because they recognize the emptiness of Aristotelian syllogistic, and take the methods of the geometers as their paradigms instead, but any attempt to trace out how their actual work outside mathematics follows these methods will lead to despair. As John Schuster puts it, Descartes' method-talk is mythic speech, and the scholar should analyze that discourse, not continue it.⁴⁷) But my guess is that for many of us, the root of the problem is that when we read these autobiographical texts, we spontaneously identify with our authors' life-stories. Not with every aspect of them: we are too jaded to believe that we or anyone else will reproduce mathematical certainty in philosophy, or in whatever our other fields are, and scepticism these days is more usually chronic than acute. But especially Ghazâlî's description of *taqlid* still strikes deep resonances; and we have experienced dissatisfaction with our teachers and with any one school of thought and even with any one discipline; the ideals of crossing beyond our original disciplinary training, of finding a paradigmatic "healthy" discipline that can be a model in our own more dubious fields, of resolving or bypassing the sterile disputes and stubborn prejudices of the previous generation, and so on, are still very much with us. In realizing how much of (for example) Descartes' self-description is (perhaps unconsciously) constructed, and in wondering uneasily how much of it we can still take as true, we are forced to confront the same questions about ourselves. The study of the history of autobiography is very useful for raising these questions, but it is not likely to resolve them.^{48,49}

Notes

1. This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Arnaldo Momigliano, from whose lectures and writings I learned so much about biography and autobiography. I have tried to write in his spirit, although as far as I know Momigliano never

- wrote about Galen's autobiographies, the most important ancient autobiographies for my purpose here (I am not sure why not – perhaps the scientific type just did not appeal to him).
2. Remarkably little has been written on the *Discourse* as a whole (though vast amounts have been written on “Cartesian method”) – Gilson's commentary (René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode, texte et commentaire par Etienne Gilson*, Paris, 1925), while full of valuable things, has little to say about the overall plan of the *Discourse* and virtually nothing about its antecedents. But see the articles by Gadoffre and Curley in Grinddi and Marion (1987).
 3. See especially Garber (1988).
 4. With a rather similar title, *Dissertatio de methodo recte regendae rationis et veritatis in scientiis investigandae*.
 5. I am not sure which was written first: the Campanella was published posthumously, in the Naudé volume, with no indication of its date of composition. (Georg Misch (1949–69), vol.4., pt.2 [published posthumously from Misch's Nachlass, Frankfurt, 1969], p.735 n164, refers to an edition of the Campanella work by Naudé, Paris, 1642; I have been unable to trace this edition.) There is a recent edition of the Campanella text by Armando Brissoni (Soveria Mannelli, 1996).
 6. Actually, I first stumbled on A.I. Sabra's summary of this autobiography in his excellent article on Ibn al-Haitham in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, which was enough to give me the crucial information. There is now some dispute about whether there were in fact two Ibn al-Haitham's, whose works have gotten hopelessly intermixed in the bibliographical tradition (see now Sabra (1998); I have not yet seen the promised continuation). In any case, by “Ibn al-Haitham” I mean the author of the autobiography preserved by Ibn abî Uṣaibi'a (that is, the text that Sabra (1998) calls “D1”). But the resonances between this text and the prologue to the *Optics* are such that I would be very surprised if they were not by the same person.
 7. While the *On Prognosis* is even more autobiographical, Galen's self-presentation there is rather different. The main body of this chapter was complete before I was able to see Vivian Nutton's *editio princeps*, in the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, of Galen's *On My Own Opinions* (Berlin, 1999), which is not primarily an autobiography but has autobiographical aspects, and some interesting variations on the types of Galen's autobiographical self-presentation that I discuss here. Nutton's commentary, in that edition, will be a very useful resource.
 8. Cp. *The Optics of Ibn al-Haytham*, tr. Sabra, I, i, 5–6 = v.1 pp.5–6: if two disciplines or sects reach different and contradictory results, these cannot be two different truths: either one or both of the paths leads to falsehood, or they both lead to the same truth, but one or both of them has not been followed correctly to the end; thus, when faced with contradictions between different disciplines or sects, we must evaluate whether each of these methods is a correct method for discovering truth, and whether it has been correctly followed by its own standards.
 9. Ibn abî Uṣaibi'a (1965), 552.
 10. I will cite the page numbers of W.M. Watt's (1953) translation, and of the Arabic edition I have used, in *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut, 1986, v.7.

Here, as with the treatises of Galen translated by Peter Singer (1997) (where likewise I give Singer's page-number followed by the reference in the Teubner Galen *Scripta Minora* or in Kuehn as appropriate), I have often started from the existing English translation but have usually modified it in the interest of greater literalness.

11. Ghazālī speaks of “plunging into” the study of these different sects and disciplines, using the same verb [*kh-w-d*] that I have cited from Ibn al-Haitham in the same context (Watt 20, MR 24); compare the texts (including some Qur’ānic passages) cited by Lane (1863), Book I, p.822 col.3, where it is used for entering into vain speech, or for entering into the same level of discourse with those who speak vainly.
12. On the other hand, the legal notion of *taqlīd* goes badly with Ghazālī’s claim that a person cannot be knowingly or willingly *muqallid*. Ghazālī himself admits that someone can make a rational judgment that someone else is a competent authority in a given field and decide to follow that person’s judgment. Presumably a legal *muqallid* would say that that is what he is doing, and this seems different from Ghazālīan *taqlīd*, where one follows someone else, not because he has an objective property like competence in a given field, but because he stands in a certain relationship to oneself, although one does not say to oneself that this is why one is following him. Ghazālī is also responding to Mu’tazilite and Ash’arite claims, both that *taqlīd* (about a given subject) is incompatible with knowledge (about that subject) and that *taqlīd* is legally/morally forbidden, and *naẓar* commanded, on fundamental religious and moral questions.
13. The financial advantage might come, not just from being able to support myself by teaching, but also from the tax-exemption granted to philosophers.
14. For all these texts, see Walzer (1949), 10–15.
15. Rāzī (1939), 303.
16. This is very close to Ghazālī’s explanation of why the scholars, as well as the ordinary believers, are in *taqlīd*, in the texts cited and analyzed by Richard Frank (1991–2), 231–4.
17. Nutton (1988), III,324.
18. See Mansfeld (1994).
19. Marmura ed. (1997), 12.
20. None of the editors or translators seems to have recognized the obvious reference to Galen. Ghazālī says: “The second group are the naturalists [*ṭabī‘īyūn*]: they are a party who constantly investigated the science of nature and the wonders of animals and plants, and constantly plunged [*kh-w-d*] into the science of the dissection/anatomy of the parts of animals. And what they saw there of the wonders of God’s craftsmanship (be He exalted!) and the inventions of his wisdom compelled them to acknowledge a wise creator who is aware of the ends and purposes of things. No one can study anatomy and the wonders of the uses of the parts [*ajā’ib manāfi‘ al-a‘dā’*] without there coming on him this necessary [i.e. spontaneously forced on us rather than acquired through inference] knowledge of the perfection of the governance of the constructor in the construction of animals, and especially the construction of man. But to these men, due to their constant investigation of nature, it appeared that the

balance of the temperament/mixture [of the four humours] has great efficacy in constituting the powers of animals. And so they thought that even the intellectual power of man is consequent on his temperament/mixture [*anna al-qūwah al-ʿāqilah min al-insān tābiʿah li-mizājihī ayḍan*], and that it is corrupted and annihilated with the corruption of the temperament/mixture. Then, when it has been annihilated, it is unintelligible (they think) for the non-existent to return. So they think that the soul dies and does not return, and they reject the hereafter and deny paradise and [hell]-fire and resurrection and judgment, so that there remains for them no reward for obedience nor punishment for sin: so that the bridle is released from them, and they abandon themselves to their appetites like the beasts" (Watt 31, MR 35–6). The references to Galen's *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* [*Kitāb manāfiʿ al-aʿḍāʾ*] and *That the Powers of the Soul are Consequent on the Temperaments/Mixtures of the Body* [*Kitāb fī anna quwa ʾl-naḥs tābiʿah li-mizāj al-badan*] (with the latter work's most notorious implication spelled out in detail) are unmistakable. ("Naturalists" also turn up in *kalām* doxographies, meaning those who believe in the causal efficacy of "natures" or natural powers, as against the view of most Muʿtazilites that only beings with free will are causal agents, and the Ashʿarite view that only God is a causal agent, but these "naturalists" have nothing to do with the teleological investigation of the parts of animals, or with Galen's thesis of the soul's dependence on the proper mixture of the four humours.) Ghazālī speaks as if the "naturalists" appeared before the "theists" or "metaphysicians" Socrates, Plato and Aristotle ("The theists/metaphysicians [*ilāhiyyūn*] are more recent than [the materialists/eternalists {*dahrīyyūn*} and the naturalists]: Socrates, who was the teacher of Plato, who was the teacher of Aristotle. . . . They together refuted the two earlier groups, the materialists/eternalists and the naturalists, and succeeded in revealing their defects to such an extent that they relieved others of the task," Watt 32, MR 36), but this is explained by the fact that "*ṭabiʿīyyūn*" is also the word used in the Arabic translations for Aristotle's "*phusikoi*" for the pre-Socratics (and it is true that Platonists and Aristotelians, though not Plato and Aristotle, wrote against Galen's thesis on the rational soul). But Ghazālī's description of the naturalists' researches and conclusions applies only to Galen and not to the pre-Socratics.

21. The Ismāʿīlīs were the most immediate threat: they argued, on sceptical grounds, that the usual Muslim authorities or types of reasoning were incapable of determining what is legally/morally commanded, and that only their *imām* could determine the law; this undermined the authority both of sunnī religious practice and of the caliph or his vicegerents, and the Ismāʿīlīs were indeed using the authority of their *imām* both to alter religious practice and to promote violent uprisings against political authorities; Ghazālī had been commissioned by the caliph, or by the real powers behind the puppet caliphate, to provide arguments to check the growing appeal of Ismāʿīlism, and indeed one of his motivations for refuting the philosophers is that the Ismāʿīlīs were using neo-Platonic philosophy to fill out the content of the wisdom supposedly received from their *imām*.
22. But note that this book, unlike the other books of Galen that I cite, seems not to have been translated into Arabic (it is not listed in Ḥunain ibn Ishāq's *Risāla* on

- his translations of Galen, or in Ibn al-Nadîm's *Fihrist*, or in Manfred Ullmann's list of Arabic translations of Galen in his [1970]).
23. Thus the mere fact of a marvelous occurrence cannot prove truth, since such marvels might happen on both sides: Pharaoh's magicians also turn their rods into serpents, and are we really going to settle the issue by the fact that Moses' serpent eats their serpents? Later in the *Deliverance from Error*, Ghazâlî says that even if the Ismâ'îlî *imâm* publicly performed the miracle of Jesus, that would not in itself prove his truthfulness, since "no one knows that miracle is a sign of truthfulness unless he knows magic and how to distinguish it from miracle, and unless he knows that God does not lead his servants into error" (Watt 51, MR 53).
24. Though two small sections, one of them including the Democritus quote, turned up in Greek and were published in 1901. There is an edition and translation of the Arabic text of the *On Medical Experience*, with a brief discussion of its history and significance, including the Greek fragments and the references to Democritus, in Walzer (1944). As Myles Burnyeat points out to me, Democritus' senses do not actually say that reason needs their evidence for its starting points: they merely ask "wretched mind, after having accepted our evidence [*par' hêmêôn labousa pisteis*] do you overthrow us? The overthrow is your downfall." This might just be read Ghazâlî's way.
25. As Racha Omari has noted in an unpublished paper, Ghazâlî is probably influenced here by the Mu'tazilite definition of knowledge as "true judgment accompanied by rest in the soul" – that is, true judgment that is also psychologically unshakeable; compare with Greek definitions saying that knowledge must be *ametaptôtos*.
26. So especially the *On the Best Kind of Teaching*, which stresses that having sound faculties but not trusting them is just as bad for science as not having sound faculties.
27. Cp. Galen's obsession with ranking other people's arguments as demonstrative or dialectical or rhetorical or sophistical, especially in the *Placita of Hippocrates and Plato*. There is useful discussion of Galen's practice here in Teun Tieleman (1996).
28. Ghazâlî thinks of mathematics, as one of the Greek sciences, as forming part of philosophy.
29. Presumably in both Galen and Ghazâlî, counterfeiting is not so much faking state authorization as passing off base metal, or a mixture of precious and base metals, as if it were the precious metal.
30. Ghazâlî complains in particular about Avicenna's drinking, and about Avicenna's excusing or outright bragging about it in his autobiography.
31. It was a fairly common *shûfî* view that gifts from rulers are unlawful or of questionable lawfulness and that a pious person should avoid them. In the *Deliverance from Error*, on a list of complaints about the '*ulamâ*' that have led to general contempt for the '*ulamâ*' and for sunnî practice, Ghazâlî lists, on a par with drinking and outright corruption or non-performance of basic religious duties, "so-and-so eats up the largesse of the ruler and does not guard himself from forbidden things" (Watt 72, MR 73). Ghazâlî says in a letter that at the time of his renunciation of teaching he took a personal vow, before the tomb of

- Abraham in Hebron (where he had made a pilgrimage, described also in the *Deliverance from Error*, Watt 59, MR 61), that he would never again accept money from a ruler (the text – in Persian, a language that I unfortunately do not read – is in *Makâtîb-i Fârsî-i Ghazzâlî*, ed. ‘Abbâs Iqbâl, Teheran, 1954, 45; there is a German translation in Krawulsky [(1971) 66]).
32. So Ghazâlî, Watt 64, MR 67, and cp. the *ḥadîth* “the dreams of a wise man are one-fortieth part of prophecy.”
 33. For Galen’s attitudes toward dreams and inspiration, see Nutton’s discussion and references in his edition of Galen’s *On My Own Opinions*, 135–7. Where Galen seems to go furthest are in the fragments of a commentary on the Hippocratic *Oath* preserved by Ibn abî Uṣaibi’a, for which see Franz Rosenthal (1956): “Those who say that God created the craft of medicine argue in favor of that by referring to the fact that such an exalted science cannot be invented by the intellect of man. This theory is the theory of Galen, and this is the text of what he mentions in his *Commentary on the Book of the Oaths by Hippocrates*” (59); “In his *Commentary on the Oaths by Hippocrates*, he [Galen] says: people in general bear witness to the fact that it was God who gave them the craft of medicine through inspiration in dreams and visions delivering them from severe diseases. Thus we find an innumerable large number of people to whom their cure came from God, some [obtaining it] through Serapis, and others through Asclepius, in the city of Epidauros, the city of Cos, and the city of Pergamon – the last-mentioned one being my own city” (60). Rosenthal is not sure whether these fragments are authentic, and neither am I. But they were available in Arabic and attributed to Galen, and if Ghazâlî was aware of these or similar texts and thought they were by Galen, this would give added bite to his argument. As Nutton also notes, Iamblichus in his *De mysteriis* (3,3) asserts, and Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (III,44) argues (both in talking about Asclepius), that the art of medicine arose from divine inspiration; Philostratus’ argument, about the implausibility of discovering the uses of exotic and dangerous drugs through experiment, is close to Ghazâlî’s. So such ideas were certainly current in late pagan antiquity, however exactly Ghazâlî may have become aware of them.
 34. Ghazâlî here draws an extended analogy between compound drugs mixed in fixed proportions and the combination of different ritual elements with, for example, their time-lengths in fixed proportions.
 35. Ghazâlî gives a number of examples of the vanity of rationalist attempts, either to show *a priori* that some phenomenon could not happen, or *ex post facto* to explain why it did happen. Particularly interesting is the example of the cooling power of opium, which is much greater than that of the cold elements (earth, water) contained in opium (Watt 78–9, MR 78–9): this seems to be referring specifically to Galen’s discussion of the cooling properties of opium in *On Mixtures* Book III. Ghazâlî says that the opponent has been forced to admit this rationally inexplicable property of opium, and should therefore admit similarly inexplicable properties of religious ritual. Ghazâlî calls this opponent *al-ṭabîʿî*. Watt translates “the physicist,” which is the usual meaning, but this is the same word used before as the name for a sect of philosophers (“the naturalists”) – that is, as we have seen, effectively as a proper name for Galen.

36. As Sarah Stroumsa has shown in her (1999), esp. 93–107, Râzî in his *Kitâb Makhârîq al-Anbiyâ'* had attacked the traditional apologetics based on prophetic miracles, arguing that the prophets could have done all these things by trickery. Ghazâlî's apologetics, which warns us against the argument from miracles and directs us instead to the prophet's knowledge of the psychological effects of ritual, is thus (among other things) a reply to Râzî's challenge, arguing for prophecy on a basis that Râzî would be forced to admit.
37. Ghazâlî may perhaps intend a reference not only to Galen's methods for validating his own authority, but also to Shâfi'î's, since Shâfi'î's disciple Ibrâhîm Muzanî cites Shâfi'î as forbidding *taqlîd* whether of himself or of others (Muzanî, *Mukhtaṣar* 1, cited *Encyclopedia of Islam* (II) s.v. *taqlîd*).
38. Temkin (1973), for example, 8–9.
39. Georg Misch's *Geschichte der Autobiographie* (not just the *History of Autobiography in Antiquity* available in English [Misch (1950)], but the mammoth *Geschichte der Autobiographie* [Misch (1949–1969)]), is a treasury of information, with references to many Renaissance autobiographies, some of them clearly indebted to Galen. Misch discusses both the Ibn al-Haitham and the Ghazâlî texts (vol. 3:2, 984–91 and 1040–76), and was aware that they both belonged somehow to a Galenic type of autobiography. Misch also mentions the *Discourse* as belonging to “the definite type of self-portrayal exhibited by Galen” (*History*, v.1, 332), but Misch died before finishing the work, and volume 4, edited from Misch's notes by his students, contains only a superficial two pages on the *Discourse* (vol. 4:2, 736–7) with no mention of Galen. Misch never connects the dots to give any connected discussion of a Galenic genre (he comes closest in *History*, v.1, 328–32), but his work contains suggestions, here and on much else, that might be fruitfully pursued. (By contrast, awareness of the Galenic subvariety of autobiography seems to have entirely vanished from the more recent, and more theoretically sophisticated, literature on the history of biography and autobiography.) Two works that I have looked at, and that contain explicit references to Galen's model, are Cardano's *De libris propriis* (Leyden, 1557) and Conrad Gesner's article on himself in his *Bibliotheca universalis* (Zürich, C. Froschouerum, 1545; the article on himself, “Conradus Gesnerus Tigurinus” in due alphabetical order, is pp. 179v–183r). The Cardano on p. 3 gives the fuller title *De libris propriis, eorumque ordine et usu, ac de mirabilibus operibus in arte medica per ipsum factis*, alluding to both of Galen's autobibliographies and also to the *On Prognosis* (cited and emulated explicitly pp. 149–51); Cardano is in general obsessed with rivalling Galen. Cardano cites various models, and chiefly Galen, in defense of his speaking or boasting about himself: “verum quibus grave videtur, quod cum librorum meorum Elencho aliqua de me gloriosius scripserim, hi nihil agunt aliud quam quod fatentur se Hieronymum, Augustinum, Ciceronem, Galenum, Erasmus nunquam legisse, aut si legerint, omnino contempsisse. Namque hi omnes haec omnia scriptis suis mandarunt, quamquam quidam obscurius, quidam diffusius. Nos tamen Galenum in primis sequuti, qui, ut ingenuum decet virum, aperte et sine dissimulatione aliqua haec omnia complexus est, non solum a iusta accusatione, sed etiam a calumnia in tutos fore nos existimamus” (8, and cp. 54–5). Gesner cites as models “Hieronymus, Gennadius, Honorius, Sigebertus, et Ioannes Tritthenhemius,” who “suas ipsi lucubrationes catalogis

scriptorum, quos ecclesiasticos vocant, inseruerunt,” and then also “divus Augustinus . . . de vita sua et scriptis libros *Confessionum* et *Retractationum* aedidit; et Cl. Galenus opusculum *De libris propriis*, et alterum *De ordine suorum librorum*” (179v). However, many of these Renaissance texts are less promising than they sound: Galen gives them a formal model or excuse, but often they are dry catalogues of compositions, or boasts of accomplishments, with nothing about the author’s own process of discovery or of overcoming of methodological obstacles – in this respect resembling another frequently cited model, Cicero *De divinatione* II,i,1–ii,7 (and cp. the end of the *Brutus*), more than Galen or Ibn al-Haitham or Ghazālī or Descartes.

40. This appeal was originally directed in the first instance to my London commentator, Vivian Nutton, who indeed supplied many references to Renaissance medical autobiographies, many of which I have not yet been able to pursue. Nutton also points to Renaissance biographies of Galen, sometimes serving as prefaces to printed collections of Galen’s works, which drew heavily on Galen’s autobiographies and could thus transmit Galen’s self-presentation as a possible model for Renaissance writers to use in describing their own lives: see Nutton (2003). Both Cardano and Gesner, cited in the previous note, as well as van Helmont, cited in the following note, and de Clave, discussed in the main text, were doctors.
41. I would like to thank Dan Garber for bringing this text to my attention. I would also like to note here another, more famous and fascinating text, highly idiosyncratic but obviously in the Galenic tradition, which Catherine Wilson first called to my attention. This is the autobiographical beginning of Jean-Baptiste van Helmont’s posthumously published collected works, the *Ortus Medicinae* or (to use the odd title of the seventeenth-century English translation, which I will cite) *Oriatrike*. Van Helmont died in 1644, and his works were published by his son Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont in 1648 (Amsterdam, with Elzevier, the same publisher as for Descartes and Campanella); the English version appeared at London in 1662 (I am using the London edition of 1664). I do not know whether his autobiographical preface was written before or after the *Discourse*, but neither Descartes nor van Helmont could have had much use for the other. Van Helmont appropriates many aspects of Galen’s self-presentation to himself, although with Christian and alchemical twists and a much higher proportion of inspiration to logic (van Helmont relies on divinely inspired dreams, like Galen but much more so); but he is also malevolently obsessed with Galen, even more than with Aristotle (see, for example, the chapter on “the ignorant natural philosophy of Aristotle and Galen,” 41–7, with a particular attack on Galen, 46–7). Naturally, van Helmont has to be concerned with Galen, since he is trying to overthrow orthodox Galenic therapeutic practice and the natural philosophy it is based on (particularly the claim that diseases result from imbalances of the four humours, and should be treated by restoring that balance; van Helmont thinks that diseases are caused by something like a Lucretian “seed,” but under the guidance of an incorporeal spirit, attacking the body). But his resentment of Galen also has to do with Galen’s claims for his scientific method (“Afterwards Galen . . . framed Suppositions or Complexions, humours and degrees, promising in an easie Method, Mathematical demonstrations of

those things, which nature onely is able to measure: which same things, he [= nature] kept secret to himself, and at length, laid open some things to Alchymists alone" (2)), and with Galen's success in eclipsing his predecessors and taking sole credit for himself ("But Galen snatching the glory of his Predecessors in to himself, extended his own Art, contained in a few Rules, into huge Volumes" (3)). The following passage captures the tone:

I indeed, even from my tender bones or years, have esteemed knowledge before riches . . . Indeed Physitians demanded, why I lesse cured according to Galen, and refused to follow them, or the flock of those that went before them? . . . Straightway I learned, the more to doubt of the stedfastness of Galen's speculations, after I had beheld the very Maxims of the Schooles themselves, to be full of sores and defects; then at length, by little and little, I more and more confirmed this conceit, by Discourse and Experience; to wit, that every way, the Seeds of ignorance, by the same contagion, pierced even into the Root of healing, and minds of the healers. Therefore I straightway left off all Books of all, accurate Discourses, and empty promises of the Schooles, firmly believing every good gift to come down from the father of Lights [James 1:17], and rather also, that of Medicine Adeptical. I have thoroughly viewed some foreign Nations, and I found almost the same sluggishness and ignorance amongst them all. But those who were the more diligent seekers after knowledge, indeed I found also more stedfast in their purpose, and more circumspect in presuming; but alike, yea more ignorant than the rest. In the mean time, it ingeniously grieved me, of the pains I before took, and of the disquietness I endured in learning. But in multitude of Books there was no where comfort or knowledge; but vain promises, abuses, and very many errors. Therefore I long since considered with my self, that the Art of healing was a meer juggle, brought in by the Greeks: till at length, the holy Scriptures better instructed me. . . . In the mean time, Reader, I am angry with myself, because it is scarce lawful to open my conceptions, in the truth, without hurting the esteem of Authours gone before me. But the liberty of former Ages hath raised me up, which made Galen to go unpunished, yea to be praised, although he frequently makes Erostratus, Asclepiades, Protagoras, Erasistratus, Herophilus (I here make no mention of Moses) and many that were before him, guilty of error; yea, and he hath often carped at Quintus his master, whom notwithstanding (though an Empiricist) he witnesseth, that he hath followed in most things (7-8).

There is also a sceptical crisis (11) on the completion of his official philosophical studies in his seventeenth year, then a series of experiments with and rejections of various academic disciplines; all this bears comparison with Descartes.

42. A "docte Espagnole," evidently Luisa Oliva Sabuco de Nantes y Barrera, author of a *Nueva filosofia de la naturaleza del hombre* (1587), written from a medical standpoint. But I cannot explain why De Clave calls her "Catharina."
43. Bloch (1990).
44. This last is actually putting it a bit too strongly, since de Clave stresses, against the empiricist doctors, that he is looking for philosophical reasons, and for physical foundations of medicine, although the reasons must have a point of departure in sense-experience.
45. But it is noteworthy that in a letter of 30 March 1628, Guez de Balzac reminds Descartes of "l'histoire de vostre esprit," which Descartes had apparently promised to write, whereas Descartes' intense involvement with medicine seems to date from the early 1630s. But we do not know how close Descartes' promise

of 1628 would have been to the published *Discourse*, and he may also have encountered the Galenic autobiographical tradition even by 1628.

46. Van Ess (1987).

47. See Schuster (1986). We can thus see how to answer one criticism I have heard – namely, that I have assumed that the parallels in our authors’ self-descriptions are due to borrowing, when they might just be due to objective similarities in their lives, since they all faced the same objective need of discovering a method for their scientific work. The answer is that it is impossible to figure out, from our authors’ descriptions of their methods, what methods they actually followed; it will not work, and is the wrong order of explanation, to explain their method-talk as the result of their method-practice. I do not mean that method-talk is just window-dressing: it is very important in creating an ideal that can be used in criticizing earlier thinkers (for example, Ghazālī’s criticism of the failure of the metaphysicians’ demonstrations is brilliant and largely correct), and the ideal does, in the long run, have an effect in shaping scientific practice.

48. Let me repeat from before that I have only been trying to supply one relevant context for reading the *Discourse on the Method*: I do not claim that this is the magic key to the *Discourse* or that it will of itself produce radical revisions in our interpretation, and I know that I have said very little here about the *Discourse* itself. Let me also note another way in which the picture I have sketched is incomplete. I have begun the story with Galen, because he seems to be the immediate source for both the Muslim and the Renaissance Christian traditions I have described (though of course I must be missing many important figures), and I do not know anyone before Galen who is directly comparable to Galen. But there are still questions about Galen’s appropriation of earlier intellectual self-descriptions, and about Galen’s relation to other late ancient writers who do not appear to be indebted to him. One obvious possible antecedent for Galen is the Platonic Socrates’ (probably largely fictional) account of his disappointments in physics and his “second sailing” in dialectic (*Phaedo* 96a5–100a8; this was suggested already by Misch, *History*, v.1 pp.106–7 and p.331). Another comparandum, not strictly an autobiography, is Sextus Empiricus’ account of the typical Pyrrhonist’s life-story (P.H. I,xii,25–30): first a dissatisfaction with the contradictions among appearances and a conversion to philosophy, then a disappointment and despair with philosophy itself, leading to the attainment of happiness through the suspension of judgment. This sounds like the Galenic story, except that the Pyrrhonian crisis is permanent and cheerful. Is Galen responding to a Pyrrhonist version of the story? Or perhaps Galen and Sextus are both independently responding to a simpler Stoic conversion-to-philosophy narrative, such as we find (without first-person reference) in Epictetus *Discourses* II.11, “What is the beginning of philosophy?” (There, what turns people to philosophy is the recognition of the insufficiency of mere opinion and the search for a criterion, and the way people recognize the insufficiency of mere opinion is by recognizing that their opinions conflict with their neighbors’, or with the opinions of foreign nations. But Epictetus does not talk about conflict between different schools of philosophy [or of any other discipline], or about people who believe things simply because they follow some authority. The problem seems to be simply that we are born with concept of good and bad, right and

wrong, and so on, and that we proceed to apply these concepts without adequate knowledge and without feeling that we need to be taught how to use them.) Another intellectual autobiography with some interesting parallels both to Galen and to Sextus is Justin Martyr's, in the early chapters of the *Dialogue with Trypho*: at the moment I do not know how to account for these similarities. A larger question is about the relation of what I have called the Galenic autobiographical genre to Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine too has early scholastic successes, an ambition for a higher wisdom, disappointments with various sects and disciplines, a sceptical crisis, and a resolution through the discovery both of the Plotinian method of ascent from bodies to soul and God, and of specifically Christian practices (faith in the scriptures, submission to church authority, allegorical interpretation of scripture). I have noted earlier Jaap Mansfeld's placing of Galen's autobibliographies within a tradition of biobibliographical prolegomena to an author's collected works (such as Porphyry's *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books*), and Augustine's *Confessions* + *Retractions* serve exactly this purpose in many editions of his works. But it is hard to imagine that Augustine knew Galen's autobiographies, or would care, and my feeling is that Augustine is a more original and idiosyncratic autobiographer than the others I have discussed, although this is a matter of degree. The *Confessions* is also much more God-centered than any of the other works, even the *Deliverance from Error*, although of course the Augustine and Ghazâlî texts have often been compared; the Ghazâlî is to this extent more properly autobiographical. We can also ask to what extent the Galenic and Augustinian influences merge in later Christian writers. I have emphasized elsewhere how deeply Descartes' *Meditations* are indebted to Augustine, but my sense is that the *Discourse* (except for the metaphysics of Part Four) is not. I do not know how to proceed here.

49. I would like to thank Rachana Kamtekar, Alison Laywine, Yaseen Noorani, and Rob Wisnovsky for comments on early drafts of this chapter, Vivian Nutton and Doug Wright for their comments in London and Toronto respectively, members of those audiences for their questions, and Richard Frank, Alexander Nehamas, Jim Whitman, and Fritz Zimmermann for more recent comments.

Subjectivity, Ancient and Modern

The Cyrenaics, Sextus, and Descartes

Gail Fine

1. Introduction

In "Idealism and Greek Philosophy," Myles Burnyeat asks two questions¹:

1. How did it come about that philosophy accepted the idea that *truth* can be obtained without going outside subjective experience?
2. When and why did philosophers first lay claim to *knowledge* of their own subjective states?

Burnyeat argues that "it is Descartes who holds the answers to [these two] questions."² The ancients, he alleges, do not view the subjective as a realm about which there are truths. Correspondingly, neither do they view it as a realm about which there is or might be knowledge; for knowledge (both in fact and according to the ancients) implies truth.³ Nor, Burnyeat argues, do the ancients view the subjective as a realm about which there are or could be beliefs. As he puts it in "Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?"⁴:

Belief is the accepting of something as true. There can be no question of belief about appearance, as opposed to real existence, if statements recording how things appear cannot be described as true or false, only statements making claims as to how they really are.

In Meditation Two, by contrast, Descartes "discovers . . . the truth of statements describing the subjective states involved in the process of doubt itself"; "[s]ubjective truth has arrived to stay, constituting one's own experience as an object for description like any other."⁵ Since "the addition of truth . . . opens up a new realm for substantial knowledge,"⁶ Descartes can, and in fact does, "put subjective knowledge at the center of epistemology."⁷

In "The Objective Appearance of Pyrrhonism," Stephen Everson argues that "[t]his contrast between the Cartesian position, in which the subject is taken to have knowledge of his subjective mental states, and the ancient view, according to which he is not, is, I think, a false one. If there is a difference

between the two conceptions of the subject's access to his mind, this is not it."⁸ In his view, some of the ancients claim to know their own affections (*pathê*). But, he argues, the "ancients did not recognize the existence of distinctively subjective states to have knowledge of."⁹ Rather, the affections they discuss are, and are described by them as being, wholly and only objective. So Everson agrees with Burnyeat that the ancients do not think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about the subjective. His explanation is that they do not take anything to be subjective.

I shall defend a third view: that the Cyrenaics think that there are subjective states, and that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about them. I shall also argue that Sextus is aware of their view, and accepts at least part of it.¹⁰ Defending these claims, and considering Burnyeat's and Everson's views, will occupy us through Section 6. If I am right, then Descartes is not the first person to believe that truth and knowledge can be obtained without going outside the subjective realm.¹¹ Even if he is not novel on that score, however, his views about subjectivity could differ from ancient views about it in other ways. And in "Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space," John McDowell argues that they do.¹² I explore this issue in Section 7.

2. A Working Account of Subjectivity

It will help, to begin with, to have a working account of subjectivity – though there is, to say the least, considerable controversy here. There is, however, rough agreement about examples: if there are subjective states, then being in pain, having a sensation, experiencing something, and being appeared to all count.¹³ Assuming that there are such states, what does their subjectivity consist in? Following Thomas Nagel, it's often said that if *S* is a subjective state, there is something it is like to be in *S*; there is some characteristic phenomenological feel to subjective states.¹⁴ According to McDowell, two features that are essential to subjectivity are "representational bearing on the world and availability to introspection."¹⁵ It's also often said that one has some sort of privileged access to one's subjective states. McDowell, for example, says that "nothing could be recognizable as a characterization of the domain of subjectivity if it did not accord a special status to the perspective of the subject."¹⁶ There is, however, considerable dispute about what privileged access consists in: is it, for example, infallibility, incorrigibility, or something else? There are different accounts of these notions in turn.¹⁷ There are also disputes about whether materialism or functionalism can accommodate subjectivity.¹⁸ Some of these issues will concern us later. For now, all I hope to have done is to have provided a rough indication of the sort of thing subjectivity is supposed to be, which is not to say that everyone agrees either that each of the features I've mentioned is necessary or that they are all jointly sufficient. Nonetheless, if someone discusses appropriate examples, such as being in pain or being appeared to, and describes them along

the lines just mentioned, it is reasonable to assume, and I shall assume – unless the context suggests a reason for not doing so – that subjective states are being described under a subjective mode of presentation.

3. Burnyeat on Subjectivity and Truth

Burnyeat's view has been widely influential,¹⁹ and rightly so. For it is interesting and stimulating, and he discusses issues of fundamental and current importance: few issues are more discussed nowadays than subjectivity. Anyone interested in that issue has reason to wonder whether present concerns with it are parochial: is an interest in subjectivity new with Descartes? If not, does Descartes at least have a new conception of it? Burnyeat has a story – or stories – to tell on these matters, and it, or they, repay careful attention. I shall therefore begin by discussing Burnyeat in some detail. Doing so will allow me to introduce the general issues I want to discuss; it will also set the stage for my alternative.

First, then, Burnyeat allows – as surely one should – that both Sextus and the Cyrenaics think that appearances (*phantasiai*; Burnyeat translates this as “impressions”) and affections (*pathê*; Burnyeat translates this as “experiences”) exist.²⁰ In speaking of Sextus, for example, he says²¹:

When the skeptic assents, it is because he experiences two kinds of constraint. First, what he assents to are states with which we are forcibly affected in accordance with an impression (*PHI* 13). He can assent to an impression, or, as Sextus also puts it (*PHI* 10), he can assent to what is presented in accordance with an impression he is affected with in so far as it appears, because the impression itself, the way the thing appears, is a passive affection not willed by the person who experiences it and as such is not open to enquiry or dispute (*PHI* 22); in other words, it is merely what is happening to him now. But second, besides having the impression forced upon us, we are also constrained in these cases to assent. The skeptic yields to things which move us affectively and lead us by compulsion to assent (*PHI* 193).

Or again²²:

We concede, says Sextus (*PHI* 20), that honey appears sweet because we are sweetened perceptually (*glukazometha aisthêtikôs*), which I take to mean: we have a perceptual experience featuring the character of sweetness. The skeptic's assent is simply the acknowledging of what is happening to him, and the compulsion to assent, to acknowledge what is happening to him, is equally simple. It is not that there is resistance to be overcome, but that there can be no dispute about what the impression is; it is *azêtêtos*, not open to inquiry. The impression is just the way something appears to one, and assent to it is just acknowledging that this is indeed how the thing appears to one at the moment.

Sceptics have perceptual experiences, and are appeared to in various ways. These are things that happen to them, ways in which they are affected, and to which they cannot help but assent. Appearances and affections exist, then.

But are they subjective? Burnyeat certainly describes them as though he thinks they are. For example, he translates *pathos* as “experience,” and speaks of perceptual experiences and of how one is appeared to. As we’ve seen, experiences and states of being appeared to would normally be thought to be subjective. Moreover, Burnyeat characterizes them in ways that suggest that he takes them to be subjective. He says, for example, that Sextus’s point²³

is one familiar in modern philosophy, that how a thing appears or seems is authoritatively answered by each individual. When Sextus says that a man’s impression is *azêlêtos*, not subject to enquiry (*PHI* 22), the claim is that his report that this is how it appears to him cannot be challenged and he cannot properly be required to give reason, evidence or proof for it.

In addition to saying that we have first-person authority about how we are appeared to, Burnyeat also says that “[i]ncorrigibility was there before [Descartes] in Hellenistic philosophy, in the shape of Sextus’s description [in *PHI* 22] of appearance statements as *azêlêtos*, immune to question or inquiry.”²⁴ As we’ve seen, it’s generally thought that we have first-person authority, and are incorrigible, about our subjective states. To be sure, first-person authority and incorrigibility can be understood in different ways, and however they are understood, they might not be sufficient for subjectivity. Be that as it may, if someone claims that we have first-person authority, and are incorrigible, about our experiences and about how we are appeared to, it is natural to think that subjectivity is at issue. And that that is what Burnyeat intends is suggested by the following passage²⁵:

The skeptic finds himself assenting to a host of propositions of the form “Such and such appears to me now thus and so”, but he never finds reason to advance to the truth claim “It is as it appears”. There is thus a large class of statements which, as Sextus puts it (*PHI* 22), are immune from enquiry (*azêlêtos*). They are immune from enquiry, not open to dispute, because they make no claim as to objective fact. They simply record the skeptic’s own present experience, the way he is affected (in Greek, his *pathos*), leaving it open whether external things really are as they appear to him to be.

Here Burnyeat explains why Sextus takes us to have first-person authority, and to be incorrigible, about our experiences (*pathê*), and why he thinks that claims about them are not matters of inquiry or investigation: the reason is that these states are not objective. If someone says that experiences exist, that we are incorrigible and have first-person authority about them, and that they are not objective, the natural inference is that he thinks they are subjective. So at least sometimes, Burnyeat seems to take appearances and affections to be subjective. Nor is this just his description, imposed from the outside, as it were. He seems to be explaining how Sextus conceives of the situation. For he thinks that Sextus takes us to be incorrigible, and to have first-person authority, in such cases. In the passage just quoted, he is giving Sextus’s reason for saying that appearance-statements are immune from inquiry.²⁶

As we saw in Section 1, Burnyeat also argues that the ancients do not take claims about the subjective to be true; correspondingly, neither do they think there are beliefs or knowledge here. Putting all of this together, we may say that, according to Burnyeat:

(A) Appearances and affections are subjective, both in fact and according to the ancients; but the ancients do not think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about them.

Elsewhere, however, Burnyeat seems to suggest a different view. He says, for example, that²⁷

An earlier group of skeptics, the Cyrenaic school, did hold that we know our own experience (*pathos*) and nothing else. They put it in these terms: I know how I am being affected, but not what causes me to be thus affected. I can say, for example, "I am being burned" or "I am being cut", but not that it is fire that is burning or iron that is cutting me. If these examples are mystifying to a modern ear, it is not just for lack of the information that cutting and cauterizing were two main operations of ancient surgery. What one wants to ask is whether they mean the physical event of cauterizing or the way it feels. But to that question *no answer is forthcoming*.

And in "Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?" he says²⁸:

Do they mean, when they talk of undergoing something, the physical event or the way it feels? To that question *there is no clear answer* . . . It is the same with Sextus.

Burnyeat says that the Cyrenaics think we know our affections or experiences (*pathê*), so presumably he also thinks they allow truth and belief here.²⁹ It's just that there is no answer to the question whether such states are subjective. This gives us³⁰:

(B) Some of the ancients think there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about appearances and affections; but there is no answer to the question whether affections and appearances are subjective.

(A) and (B) agree that (some of) the ancients do not view the subjective as a realm about which there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge. But they explain this differently. According to (A), the reason is that although they think there are subjective states, they do not view the subjective as a realm about which there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge. According to (B), the reason is that although at least some of the ancients think there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about appearances and affections, there is no answer to the question whether such states are subjective. There is, then, an ambiguity in saying that the ancients do not view the subjective as a realm about which there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge. (A) and (B) resolve the ambiguity in different ways.³¹ Indeed, they resolve it in conflicting ways: (A) provides an answer to a question that (B) says is unanswerable.

Let us stay with (B) for a moment. Why does Burnyeat say there is no answer to the question whether affections and appearances are subjective?

His reason seems to be contained in the following passage: “my own view is that to insist that Sextus’s illustrative *pathos* must be either a subjective feeling or an objective happening is to impose a Cartesian choice which is foreign to his way of thinking.”³² He makes the same claim about the Cyrenaics: “it looks to be anachronistic to think we must be able to “split” the Cyrenaic notion of experience into separate (mental) and physical (objective) components.”³³ I can think of two interpretations of these and other similar remarks. One interpretation is:

(C) The ancients lack the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity; they don’t view anything as being either subjective or objective.

As we’ve seen, however, Burnyeat thinks the ancients talk about experiences and how one is appeared to; he also thinks Sextus says that we are incorrigible and have first-person authority about such states, and that they aren’t objective. I’m not sure what else is needed for someone to have concepts of subjectivity and objectivity. One or another ancient concept of them might differ from one or another modern concept of them, and the ancients might not have articulated the concepts as clearly and precisely as various modern philosophers do. But the evidence adduced in favor of (A) suggests that for all that, it is not anachronistic to import concepts of subjectivity and objectivity into ancient discussions.

On a second interpretation, what’s anachronistic is thinking we can *split* an affection into *separate* mental (or subjective) and physical (or objective) components. We would not be able to do that if the ancients took affections to be both subjective and objective. And sometimes that seems to be Burnyeat’s view.³⁴ This gives us:

(D) Affections and appearances are, both in fact and according to the ancients, both subjective and objective, both mental and physical.

(D), however, far from explaining (B), conflicts with it.³⁵ For (B) says there is no answer to the question whether affections and appearances are subjective. But (D) provides an answer: like (A), it says they are subjective. It’s just that they are objective too.³⁶

I’ve argued so far that there is an ambiguity, captured by (A) and (B), about what Burnyeat means in saying that the ancients do not view the subjective as a realm about which there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge. The ambiguity centers on whether appearances and affections are, or are not, subjective, either in fact or according to the ancients. I’m inclined to think that (A) is Burnyeat’s considered, or main, view.³⁷ It at any rate seems to be one of his views, and so it is worth considering further. It can be understood in different ways. For example, it might mean:

(E) The ancients do not think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about subjective states, in the attenuated sense that they do not, as an empirical matter of fact, use

“true,” “belief,” or “knowledge” of subjective states; they use these terms only of what is objective.

Some passages suggest (E). Burnyeat says, for example, that “earlier skeptics did not *call* [claims about subjective states] true or false.”³⁸ But even if he intends (E), I do not think it is all he means. For he also says that “an ancient skeptic would hardly have recognized [truths about subjective states] as *truths* at all.”³⁹ This suggests he means more than that the ancients do not explicitly use “true” here, though they would be happy to do so; it suggests that their (alleged) failure to do so goes deeper.⁴⁰ Or again, we’ve seen that Burnyeat says that “there can be no question of belief about appearance, as opposed to real existence, if statements recording how things appear *cannot* be described as true or false, only statements making claims as to how they really are.”⁴¹ The use of the modal term (“cannot”) suggests that the ancients have a view of truth according to which appearance-statements cannot be true or false. The point is not just one about how the ancients happen to talk (in the surviving texts); it is a deeper point about their view of the nature of truth. So perhaps Burnyeat means:

(F) The ancients do not think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about the subjective, because they have a special concept of truth, such that by definition it applies only to what is objective.

Hegel has such a concept of truth.⁴² And sometimes Burnyeat seems to have it in mind. He says, for example, that in the ancient contexts “true” *means* “true of a real objective world.”⁴³ Moreover, he cites Hegel as anticipating him on this point.⁴⁴ But I’m not sure whether Burnyeat intends (F).⁴⁵ For one thing, his account of Protagoras (which I discuss later) counts against ascribing it to him. For another, he thinks the ancients are right to assume that belief involves taking to be true. In saying this, he doesn’t seem to mean that they rightly think one can believe *p* only if it is about what is external, objective, common, and so on.⁴⁶ Nor does he seem to think that Descartes, in attempting to refute scepticism, introduces a new *concept* of truth when he says that there are truths about subjective states. Rather, Burnyeat seems to think that Descartes sees that “true,” in both the ancient and his own sense of the term, has a wider extension than the ancients realized. So perhaps Burnyeat means:

(G) The ancients do not think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about the subjective in the sense that, though their concept of truth is in principle applicable to the subjective, it did not occur to them to apply it to the subjective; they unreflectively restrict truth, and so belief and knowledge, to what is objective.

(G), however, seems too weak to capture his claims (cited earlier) that according to the ancients, “statements recording how things appear *cannot* be described as true or false” and that ““true” *means* true of a real objective

world.” Burnyeat seems, then, to intend something stronger than (G), but not as strong as (F).

4. A Possible Reconstruction of Burnyeat’s Account

We’ve seen that one of Burnyeat’s views seems to be that though the ancients think there are subjective states, they do not think there are truths about them. Here it is natural to object: If it appears to me that I am in pain, surely it is true that I am appeared to this way? How could anyone think otherwise? Burnyeat is aware of this objection. His reply is that it is anachronistic: “it would be a mistake – though . . . a mistake that comes naturally to a post-Cartesian philosopher – to object that the sceptic has left himself some truth after all, namely, all those truths about his experience which he records in statements of the form ‘It appears to me thus and so’.”⁴⁷ In Burnyeat’s view, this would be a mistake because, again, it fails to see that the ancients restrict truth to what is objective, common, and independent of and external to ourselves. Since statements about how one is appeared to are not about what is objective or common, or independent of or external to ourselves, the ancients do not think there are truths about them. Correspondingly, neither do they think there are beliefs or knowledge about them. This suggests the following argument⁴⁸:

- (1) p is true or false only if it is about a real, common, objective, independent, external world.⁴⁹
- (2) Appearances are subjective.⁵⁰
- (3) Therefore appearances are not part of a real, common, objective, independent, external world.
- (4) Therefore there are no true or false statements about how one is appeared to.⁵¹
- (5) One can believe p only if p is true or false.⁵²
- (6) Therefore no one can have beliefs about how one is appeared to.
- (7) One can know p only if p is true.⁵³
- (8) Therefore no one can know how one is appeared to.

(1) is a crucial premise of this argument. Burnyeat ascribes it not only to ancient sceptics but also to “the ancients” quite generally. As he puts it⁵⁴:

When the skeptic doubts that anything is true (*PH* II 88ff., *M* VIII 17ff.), he has exclusively in view claims as to real existence. Statements which merely record how things appear are not in question – they are not called true or false – only statements which say that things are thus and so in reality. In the controversy between the skeptic and the dogmatist over whether any truth exists at all, the issue is whether any proposition or class of propositions can be accepted as true of a real objective world as distinct from mere appearance. For “true” in these discussions means “true of a real objective world”; “the true,” if there is such a thing, is what conforms with

the real, an association traditional to the word *alethes* since the earliest period of Greek philosophy (cf. *M XI* 221).

Or again⁵⁵:

Protagoras' book was called *Truth* precisely because it offered an account of the conditions under which things really are as they appear to be. The Greek use of the predicates "true" and "false" embodies the assumption of realism on which I have been insisting all along.

As these passages make clear, Burnyeat thinks the ancients assume (1) because they unquestioningly assume realism. Now, there are many versions of realism. And certainly Burnyeat sometimes suggests that all the ancients assume a sort of realism according to which *p* can be true only on the conditions specified in (1). However, the reasons Burnyeat gives for thinking the ancients assume this version of realism do not show that they do so. He says, for example, that for Hellenistic philosophers "[t]he world is as it is independently of us."⁵⁶ This doesn't imply that there are truths only about how things are independently of us; it says only that some things exist independently of us.

Or again, one of Burnyeat's main concerns is to argue that the ancients assume realism in a sense that precludes their being idealists.⁵⁷ (1) may be sufficient to secure this result, but it isn't necessary. Nor need one be an idealist, or even be aware of idealism, in order to think that there are truths about subjective states: one might unreflectively assume that there are truths about both subjective states and external reality.

Burnyeat also has other arguments on behalf of (1). He says, for example⁵⁸:

Surely, one wants to say, a statement of this form ["It appears to me thus and so"] is true if and only if things do appear as the statement says they appear. But as I have already noted, in the skeptic's book to say that an appearance, or the statement expressing it, is true is to say that external things really are as they (are said to) appear to be.

Suppose my appearance that *p* is true if and only if external things really are as *p* represents them as being.⁵⁹ That doesn't show that there are no truths about how I'm appeared to. We need to distinguish (a) the conditions for an appearance's being true, in the sense of correctly capturing how (external) things are, from (b) the conditions for its being true that I'm appeared to in a given way. It can be true that I'm appeared to thus and so, even if the appearance itself is not true, that is, even if it does not capture how (external) things are. It is true that I am appeared to as though confronted by an elephant, just in case I am appeared to that way. Whether the appearance itself is true is quite another matter: that depends on whether I'm confronted by an elephant.

Burnyeat also argues that the ancients, rather than being concerned with external world scepticism, focus on “the problem of understanding how thought can be of nothing or what is not.”⁶⁰ This suggests he thinks the ancients assume (1')⁶¹:

(1') p can be true or false only if it is about something that exists.

But (1') does not imply (1). At least, this is so if (as Burnyeat thinks the ancients believe) not everything that exists is common, objective, and so on. Nor would assuming (1') preclude one from thinking there are truths about subjective states. At least, it doesn't do so if (as Burnyeat at times thinks the ancients believe) there are subjective states.

Nor can Burnyeat consistently intend (1). For he thinks that Protagoras believes there are truths⁶²; but he also argues that Protagoras denies that there is anything common, objective, or independent. As he puts it, for Protagoras “it is as true to say that the perceiving subject is dependent on there being something for it to perceive as it is to say that the thing perceived is dependent on a subject perceiving it. The ontological dependence goes both ways.”⁶³ Or again, he says that according to Protagoras, “each of us lives in his own private reality.”⁶⁴ I'm not sure precisely how Burnyeat understands reality here; but he clearly doesn't take it to involve being independent, objective, and common.⁶⁵

So I'm not persuaded that any of the ancients assume (1). Even if they do not do so, however, some of them might be committed to (4), (6), and (8) for other reasons. Even if none of them is committed to any of these views, it wouldn't follow that any of them think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about the subjective: perhaps they aren't committed one way or the other. Perhaps they aren't even committed to the existence of subjective states.

Whatever Burnyeat's considered view is, Stephen Everson (1991b) argues that affections and appearances are not, and are not conceived by the ancients as being, subjective; rather, they are, and are conceived by the ancients as being, wholly and only objective. So in place of (2), he favors:

(2') Appearances and affections are, both in fact and according to the ancients, wholly and only objective; they are not, either in fact or according to the ancients, subjective.

Correspondingly, he also rejects (3), (4), (6), and (8).⁶⁶

5. The Cyrenaics

We have now canvassed a variety of positions; it is time to adjudicate among them. I begin with the Cyrenaics. It will help to have a key passage before us:

The Cyrenaics say, then, that affections are the criteria, and that only they are apprehensible (*katalambanesthai*) and infallible (*adiapseusta*); none of the things producing

affections is apprehensible or infallible. For, they say, it is possible to assert infallibly (*adiapseustôs*) and truly (*alêthôs*) and certainly (*bebaiôs*) and incorrigibly (*anexelenktôs*) that we are whitened (*leukainometha*) or sweetened (*glukazometha*), but it is impossible to affirm that what causes the affection (*pathos*) in us is white or sweet. For it is plausible (*eikos*) that one may be disposed whitely (*leukantikôs diatethênai*) by something not white, or be sweetened by something not sweet. For just as the one who suffers from vertigo or jaundice is moved by everything yellowly, and the one who suffers from ophthalmia is reddened, and the one who presses down his eye is moved as if by two things, and the madman sees a doubled Thebes and imagines the sun double, and in all these cases it is true that people are affected in some particular way (*to men hoti tode ti paschousin*) (e.g. they are yellowed or reddened or doubled), but it is considered (*nenomistai*) false that what moves them is yellow or red or double, likewise it is very reasonable (*eulogôtaton*) for us to assume that one can apprehend nothing but one's own affections.

Hence (*hothen*) we must posit either the affections or the things productive of affections as things that are apparent (*phainomena*). And if we say that the affections are things that are apparent, we must say that all the things that are apparent are true and apprehensible. But if we call the things productive of the affections things that are apparent, we must say that all the things that are apparent are false and inapprehensible. For the affection that occurs in us reveals to us nothing more than itself. Hence (*enthen*) too, if one must speak the truth, only the affection is apparent (*phainomenon*) to us, and the external object which is productive of the affection, though it perhaps (*tacha*) exists, is not apparent to us. (Sextus, *MVII* 191–4)

In the first paragraph of this passage, Sextus seems to attribute to the Cyrenaics the view that there are truths about, and apprehension – that is, knowledge – of, affections.⁶⁷ However, matters are not so clear. First, in including “and truly” (*kai alêthôs*), I have followed Mutschmann's Teubner edition of Sextus, as does Giannantoni.⁶⁸ They, in turn, rely on manuscripts N, L, and E. However, Bury, in his Loeb edition, omits the phrase, as does Mannebach.⁶⁹ They follow manuscripts A, B, V, and R. So it is not entirely clear that Sextus explicitly says that the Cyrenaics think there are truths about affections.

However, given the relations among these different manuscripts, I think it is reasonable to include *kai alêthôs*. For the original archetype G divides into two traditions: N, and all the rest (x in Mutschmann). L and E in turn stem from a single tradition (y in Mutschmann), whereas A, B, V, and R all stem from a different tradition (sigma in Mutschmann). If we assume that the original archetype lacked *kai alêthôs*, we have to assume that N, on the one hand, and L and E, on the other, independently inserted it. It is more plausible to assume that N, L, and E all follow G, and that *kai alêthôs* dropped out of the tradition from which A, B, V and R stem – and it is worth noting that A, B, V, and R are the inferior manuscripts.⁷⁰

Moreover, Sextus says in 193: “it is true (*alêthes*) that people are affected in some particular way (e.g. they are yellowed or reddened or doubled).”

Here all the manuscripts have *alêthes*. Similarly, Sextus says in 194 that if *pathê* are *phainomena* (as he thinks they are on the Cyrenaic view), then they are all *alêthê* – that is, each of us has the truth about our own *pathê*. All the manuscripts have *alêthê* here. So we are not dependent on 191 for the explicit claim that there are truths about *pathê*; that claim is repeated in 193 and in 194, where there is no doubt about the text.⁷¹

Even if we omit *kai alêthôs* and ignore 193 and 194, it seems clear that Sextus thinks the Cyrenaics hold that there are truths about *pathê*. For *katalêpsis* is truth-entailing.⁷²

This, however, leads to a second problem: though Sextus says that the Cyrenaics think we can apprehend only our own *pathê*, it is unlikely that they initially expressed their view by using *katalambanô* or any of its cognates.⁷³ Be that as it may, it is nonetheless clear that they think we apprehend (know) our own *pathê*. For all the ancient sources ascribe that view to them. Since several of these sources are independent of one another, it seems reasonable to assume that they correctly describe the Cyrenaic view, however the Cyrenaics themselves initially expressed it. So whether or not we include *kai alêthôs*, and however the Cyrenaics initially expressed their view, it seems clear that they held both that there are truths about *pathê* and that each of us knows our own *pathê*.⁷⁴

This by itself, however, does not show that the Cyrenaics think there are truths or knowledge *about subjective states*. We can conclude that that is their view only if the *pathê* they talk about are, and are taken by the Cyrenaics to be, subjective. Certainly not all *pathê* are subjective. To have a *pathos* is simply to undergo something or to be affected in some way. When a stone is warmed by the sun, for example, it has a *pathos*: it undergoes something, it is affected in some way.⁷⁵ We need to know, then, whether the *pathê* about which the Cyrenaics say there are truths and knowledge are subjective, either in fact or according to the Cyrenaics. In our passage, examples of *pathê* include being sweetened, yellowed, and doubled.⁷⁶ How should we understand these examples? Everson suggests the following interpretation⁷⁷:

when I perceive something white, for instance, my eye-jelly (*korê*) becomes white. In perceiving a white object, my eye precisely undergoes a whitening. This change is of precisely the same sort as that undergone by any inanimate object which is capable of changing colour. What distinguishes it as a perceptual change is that the subject is aware of the change.

According to Everson, being whitened is wholly and only physical. Even if he is right about that, he has not clearly eliminated subjectivity altogether; for in addition to speaking of being whitened, he also mentions our *awareness* of it. And, one might think, the state of being aware of something is subjective, even if what one is aware of is not.⁷⁸

But should we grant that when the Cyrenaics speak of being whitened and so on, they mean to describe states that are wholly and only material and

not at all subjective? Let us grant that being whitened is a physical state.⁷⁹ As we've seen, some philosophers think that materialism is incompatible with subjectivity. Such a philosopher might argue that if the Cyrenaics are materialists, they can't in fact accommodate subjectivity. At points this seems to be Everson's view.⁸⁰ However, as we've also seen, the view that materialism precludes subjectivity is, to say the least, highly controversial. It has been argued – to my mind plausibly – that materialism can accommodate subjectivity.⁸¹ And, of course, even if the Cyrenaics are materialists, and even if materialism in fact precludes subjectivity, it would take further argument to show that the Cyrenaics think materialism precludes subjectivity. One shouldn't infer from the fact (if it is a fact) that they are materialists, that they don't think there are subjective states. Perhaps they – rightly or wrongly – believe that materialism is compatible with subjectivity.

Here it may be helpful to follow Christopher Peacocke in distinguishing the level of sense from the level of reference.⁸² To say that the Cyrenaics are materialists is to say that they don't admit subjectivity at the level of reference: they don't think there are any distinctively mental or subjective objects. That, however, is compatible with their admitting subjectivity at the level of sense: they could believe that in order fully to understand certain states, one must use subjective terms, even if the states being described are material. Everson, however, argues that:⁸³

[o]n the ancient view, . . . there is subjectivity at the level neither of reference nor of sense. In being aware of a perceptual *pathos*, the subject is directly aware of his state *as objectively described*. When the Cyrenaic claims that something appears white to him, what he is aware of is precisely that he has been whitened. The object of his awareness is white, where "white" here has the same sense as it does when used in the sentence "The snow is white". What he is aware of is not a state of affairs which is dependent upon his being aware of it – even under the description under which he is aware of it.

That is, not only do the Cyrenaics claim to be aware of what are in fact material states; they also claim to be aware of them only as described in material terms. What they are aware of is that their eye-jelly has turned white; and that is the description or mode of presentation under which they are aware of it.⁸⁴ Burnyeat argues, more moderately, that the Cyrenaic "terminology makes it impossible to decide" whether they are referring to being made physically white or to the experience of seeing, or of seeming to see, something white.⁸⁵

Now even if their terminology doesn't decide the issue on its own, the Cyrenaics might say other things that do decide the issue or, at least, that make one answer more plausible than another. And my own view is that it is more plausible to think they are describing, and take themselves to be describing, subjective states than states that are wholly and only physical; even if the states they describe are physical, they are describing them under

a subjective mode of presentation as, for example, the experience of seeing, or of seeming to see, white. They admit subjectivity at the level of sense, whether or not they admit it at the level of reference.

For one thing, even if we were to concede that talk of being whitened is ambiguous as between being made physically white, on the one hand, and seeing or seeming to see white, on the other, not all of their examples seem thus ambiguous. In *M VII* 192–3 (cited earlier), for example, in addition to speaking of being yellowed and reddened, Sextus also says that “the one who presses down his eye is moved as if by two things, and the madman sees a doubled Thebes and imagines the sun double.”⁸⁶ These people, he says, are “doubled.” It’s one thing to say that when one sees, or seems to see, something yellow, one’s eye jelly becomes yellow. It’s quite another thing to say that when one seems to see a doubled Thebes or imagines two suns, one’s eye-jelly is doubled. In these latter two cases, it’s more reasonable to suppose that the Cyrenaics are describing the subjective experiences of seeming to see two Thebes and of imagining two suns, than the physical event of one’s eye-jelly being doubled.⁸⁷

Moreover, consider their account of our epistemic access to *pathê*. In *M VII* 191 (cited earlier), they say that we can “assert infallibly and truly and certainly and incorrigibly that we are whitened or sweetened.”⁸⁸ And Plutarch tells us that:

They say we are sweetened and bittered and chilled and warmed and illuminated and darkened, each of these *pathê* having within itself its own evidence, which is intrinsic to it and irreversible. But whether honey is sweet . . . is contested by many witnesses . . . So, when belief (*doxa*) restricts itself to affections, it is infallible (*anhamartêton*), but when it oversteps them and meddles with judgments and assertions about external objects, it often both disturbs itself . . . (*Adv. Col.* 1120E-F)

Sextus and Plutarch do not elaborate on the crucial terms used here. But it is reasonable to think they mean that we are incorrigible in that we cannot be corrected; that we cannot be corrected because we are infallible; and that we are infallible in that we are guaranteed to have the truth. We are guaranteed to have the truth, because each affection has “within itself its own evidence” (*Adv. Col.* 1129E); each reveals “nothing more than itself” (*M VII* 194). The idea is that our *pathê* are so clear to us that we can’t help but describe them correctly; hence we are infallible, and so incorrigible about them.⁸⁹

If the Cyrenaics view the affections at issue here as subjective, then their description of our epistemic access to them is not surprising. For even if the view that we are incorrigible and infallible about our subjective states is not ultimately correct, it is at least intuitively plausible. It would, however, be bizarre to claim that we are infallible, are guaranteed to have the truth, about the physical condition of our eye-jelly, under that description: especially when we remember that, as Sorabji puts it, the *korê* is not the pupil, but an organ deep within.⁹⁰ Sorabji says that “[i]t would not have been obvious,

with the instruments then available, that the eye-jelly did not go coloured, or the inside of the ear noisy."⁹¹ By the same token, it would not have been obvious that the eye-jelly did go colored, or the inside of the ear noisy. Moreover, the Cyrenaics seem to think that *everyone* has privileged access to his *pathê*. But not everyone has even heard of eye-jelly; hence that can't be the description under which everyone is aware of his *pathê*.⁹²

The claim that the Cyrenaics mean to be describing subjective states under a subjective mode of presentation gains support from the fact that they describe affections in terms of the marks of subjectivity mentioned in Section 2. They give the right sorts of examples, such as imagining that there are two suns.⁹³ At least some of their examples – such as imagining that there are two suns – have representational content. The Cyrenaics also think that we can know our *pathê* through introspection, and that each of us has privileged access to our own *pathê*, indeed, that we are incorrigible and infallible about them.

One might argue that satisfying these marks is not sufficient for subjectivity. However, it's important to see that adding further criteria is controversial. If Cyrenaic *pathê* do not satisfy these further criteria, we should not conclude that the Cyrenaics do not view *pathê* as subjective; we should conclude that they do not accept these further criteria. Even if we want to say that in that case they have the wrong account of subjectivity, it doesn't follow that they are not talking about subjective states and aiming to describe them under a subjective mode of presentation. It's one thing to argue about whether the Cyrenaics' account of the subjectivity of *pathê* is correct. But that issue must be sharply separated from the issue of whether the Cyrenaics take *pathê* to be subjective, whether they are describing *pathê* under a subjective mode of presentation. I've been arguing that they do so.

On my view, then, the Cyrenaics think that there are subjective states, and that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about them.⁹⁴ Hence, to return to the claims considered in Section 3, (A), (B), and (C) are false: for the Cyrenaics take affections to be subjective, and think there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about them. If we retain *kai alêthôs* in *M* VII 191, as I've argued we should, then the Cyrenaics are also a counter-example to (E). Whether or not we retain *kai alêthôs*, the Cyrenaics are also a counter-example to (F) and (G). Turning to the argument considered in Section 4, the Cyrenaics reject (1), (4), (6), and (8).⁹⁵

6. Sextus

What, however, about Sextus? Here we need to distinguish two questions: (a) is he aware of the view that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the subjective, and (b) does he accept it? There is a good reason to answer "yes" to (a). For Sextus is our main source for the Cyrenaics. We looked earlier at his account of them in *M* VII 190–199; it was my main

evidence for the claim that the Cyrenaics think there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the subjective. Hence, if Sextus does not think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about the subjective, the reason is not likely to be that the view just didn't occur to him; his account of the Cyrenaics indicates that he is well aware of the view.⁹⁶

What about (b)? First we should ask whether, like Cyrenaic affections, Sextan appearances and affections are subjective. Here I shall be brief. I agree with Burnyeat and Everson that Sextus and the Cyrenaics are talking about the same states (even if they accord us different sorts of epistemic access to them).⁹⁷ Hence, since Cyrenaic affections are subjective, so too are Sextan affections and appearances. That they are subjective can also be argued independently of the Cyrenaics. For Sextus both gives the right sorts of examples and characterizes them appropriately. At *M* VIII 475, for example, he says that it would be rash to try to upset someone else's affection (*pathos*) by argument, explaining that "just as no one can by argument convince the joyful person that he is not joyful, or the man in pain that he is not in pain, so no one can convince the one who is convinced that he is not convinced." Feeling pain and joy are paradigm examples of subjective states. And what Sextus says about them is reminiscent of his claim in *PH* I 22 that appearance-statements are *azêtêtos*, which, as we've seen, Burnyeat – in my view rightly – explains in term of incorrigibility and first-person authority.⁹⁸ So I'm happy to accept what seems to be one of Burnyeat's views, that Sextan appearances and affections are, and are described by Sextus as being, subjective.

At least, they count as subjective on the rough account provided in Section 2. Perhaps they are not subjective on a more demanding account of subjectivity. But then we should be clear that what is at issue is the correct account of subjectivity. Be that as it may, on a rough and intuitive account of it, Sextan appearances and affections are subjective, and are so described by Sextus.

There is also evidence that Sextus agrees with the Cyrenaics that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the subjective. In *PH* I 215, for example, he says:

Some say that the Cyrenaic way is the same as scepticism, since it too (*kai*) says that we only apprehend (*katalambanesthai*) affections (*pathê*). But it differs from scepticism since it says that the aim is pleasure and a smooth motion of the flesh, while we say that it is tranquility, which is contrary to the aim they propose . . . Further, we suspend judgment, so far as the argument goes (*hoson epi tô(i) logô(i)*), about external objects (*ta ektos hupokeimena*), while the Cyrenaics assert that they have an inapprehensible nature.

Some people think that Cyrenaics and sceptics (that is, Pyrrhonists) have the same views, since both claim that only affections are apprehended. Sextus objects that Cyrenaics are not genuine sceptics. For they claim that external

objects “have an inapprehensible nature,” whereas sceptics suspend judgment about external objects “so far as the argument goes.”⁹⁹ That is, unlike the Cyrenaics, Pyrrhonists do not claim that apprehension of external objects is impossible. One might expect Sextus to add that, unlike the Cyrenaics, Pyrrhonists do not claim to apprehend – know – their affections either. But he does *not* say this.¹⁰⁰ It is tempting to think he does not do so because he *agrees* with the Cyrenaics that only affections are apprehended (that is, known).¹⁰¹ (And if he thinks they are apprehended or known, he presumably thinks there are truths about them since, again, apprehension, knowledge, implies truth. He also in this case presumably thinks there are beliefs about them, a claim I defend on independent grounds later.) And Diogenes Laertius, for one, explicitly ascribes this view to the Pyrrhonists.¹⁰² Of course, arguments *ex silentio* are not decisive, but Sextus’s silence here is suggestive. So perhaps the subjective escapes the Pyrrhonian net, just as it escapes the Cyrenaic and Cartesian nets.

However, there is also evidence against this view. For example, Sextus often claims that sceptics lack *dogmata* (beliefs) and live *adoxastôs* (without opinions). If, as is often supposed, he means that sceptics claim to have no beliefs whatsoever, then they do not claim to have beliefs about how they are appeared to; *a fortiori*, neither would they claim knowledge here.¹⁰³ However, it’s disputed whether Sextus says that sceptics disavow all beliefs. On the interpretation I favor, he does not say this. Consider, for example, *PHI* 13¹⁰⁴:

When we say that sceptics do not have beliefs (*dogmata*), we do not use “belief” in the sense in which some say, quite generally, that belief is acquiescing (*eudokein*) in something; for sceptics assent to the affections forced upon them by appearances. For example, they would not say, when heated or chilled, “I think I am not heated (or: chilled)”. Rather, we say that they do not have beliefs in the sense in which some say that belief is assent to some unclear object of investigation in the sciences; for Pyrrhonists do not assent to anything unclear.

Sceptics lack *dogmata* about everything (they take to be) unclear. But they have some *dogmata*, for they assent to the affections forced upon them by appearances. I take this to mean that they have beliefs about how they are affected, in particular about how they are appeared to.¹⁰⁵ On this view, even if sceptics do not claim to *know* how they are appeared to, they at least claim to have *beliefs* about this. If they take themselves to have beliefs about how they are appeared to, then they also think that claims about them are truth-evaluable,¹⁰⁶ in which case they do not restrict truth to what is objective, external, and so on.

Suppose, however, that, contrary to my view, Pyrrhonists claim to have no beliefs whatsoever, not even about how they are appeared to.¹⁰⁷ That would not show that it does not seem to them that there are truths or beliefs about how one is appeared to. For even if *Pyrrhonists* claim not to have such

beliefs, Sextus, as we've seen, thinks the Cyrenaics have them. In general, non-sceptics have lots of beliefs that sceptics themselves eschew. Part of the project of scepticism is precisely to rid people of their (troubling) beliefs. We should not infer from the fact that Pyrrhonists claim to lack beliefs in a given domain either that non-Pyrrhonists lack them, or that Pyrrhonists take non-Pyrrhonists to lack them.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, even if (contrary to my view) Pyrrhonists claim to lack beliefs about how they are appeared to, it would not, I think, be because they (even unconsciously or unreflectively) restrict truth to what is common, objective, external, and so on. There is a more plausible alternative: that they suspend judgment about the subjective for the same reasons that they suspend judgment elsewhere: for example, because of problems posed by the Aenesideman and Agrippan Modes. This line of argument does not assume that truth is restricted to what is external, objective, and so on. Claims about how one is appeared to, no less than claims about the external world, might be viewed as truth-evaluable. It's just that, on the view under consideration, sceptics suspend judgment about both sorts of claims. There need not be any asymmetry, not even an unconscious or unreflective one.

To summarize: my own view is that Sextus says that even sceptics have beliefs about how they are appeared to; hence he also thinks there are truths about how one is appeared to. He may also think there is knowledge here, though I am not sure about that. But even if, contrary to my view, he disclaims both knowledge and belief here, the reason would have nothing to do with an alleged restriction of truth to what is objective, common, and external. Rather, the reason would be that his scepticism is quite general, applying to the subjective no less than to the objective. And even if *sceptics* suspend judgment here, it does not follow that *all* the ancients do so: non-sceptics claim to have knowledge and belief, and so assume truth, in many cases where sceptics do not do so. And, as we've seen, the Cyrenaics claim that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the subjective; and Sextus is well aware of their view.

7. Descartes

The view that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the subjective is, then, familiar from Sextus and the Cyrenaics; it does not originate with Descartes.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Descartes's views about subjectivity could be quite different from ancient views of it. And in McDowell (1986), John McDowell says that¹¹⁰:

Simply accommodating subjectivity within the scope of truth and knowability seems, in any case, too innocent to account for the view of philosophy's problems that Descartes initiates. We need something more contentious: a picture of subjectivity as a region of reality whose layout is transparent – accessible through and through.

Or again¹¹¹:

We arrive at the fully Cartesian picture with the idea that there are no facts about the inner realm besides what is infallibly accessible to the newly recognized capacity to acquire knowledge ... [S]ubjectivity is confined to a tract of reality whose layout would be exactly as it is however things stood outside it.

Let us call this the *Fully Cartesian Conception of Subjectivity* (FCCS). It may be characterized as follows: *S* is a Fully Cartesian Subjective state if (a) it is *transparent*, in the sense that it is “infallibly” “knowable through and through by introspection,”¹¹² and if (b) it is “*autonomous*”¹¹³ in the sense that it is “self-standing, with everything within it arranged as it is independently of external circumstances.”¹¹⁴

Even if the ancients accept, or are at least aware of, the view that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the subjective, it doesn't follow that any of them are aware of the FCCS, or take anything to be subjective in that sense. So if Descartes endorses or articulates the FCCS,¹¹⁵ perhaps ancient and Cartesian views of subjectivity differ,¹¹⁶ if in a different way from that suggested by Burnyeat. I shall now argue, however, that Descartes does not advert to the FCCS.

In order to assess whether Descartes adverts to the FCCS, we need to know (among other things) exactly what McDowell means by “transparency.” I shall consider three interpretations, and I shall argue that Descartes is not committed to transparency of any of these three sorts.

The first possibility is that McDowell takes transparency to be the view that one can infallibly know, through introspection, literally every fact about one's subjective states. McDowell encourages this interpretation when he says that “the *whole truth* about” the subjective realm is infallibly knowable to introspection.¹¹⁷ However, if causal facts about one's subjective states are facts about one's subjective states, then Descartes does not accept transparency in this sense. To be sure, he eventually argues that only God could cause his idea of God, and that bodies cause his sensory ideas of bodies – though the arguments for these claims do not seem to me to rely entirely on introspection.¹¹⁸ Be that as it may, Descartes certainly doesn't think we can know through introspection – or in any other way, for that matter – what the precise cause of each of our token ideas is. He doesn't think that on every occasion on which I seem to see a horse, I can know exactly what is causing me to do so. Nor does Descartes assume this sort of transparency in Meditation I. On the contrary, in Meditation I he claims *not* to know what the causes of his ideas are.

Here, then, is a second interpretation of what McDowell has in mind: that the *intrinsic nature* of one's subjective states is transparent.¹¹⁹ If, as seems reasonable, the intrinsic nature of one's subjective states includes their essence, then, on this view, one can know, through introspection alone, whether one's subjective states are material or immaterial. Hence McDowell writes that on the FCCS, “immaterialism seems unavoidable.”¹²⁰

I do not think Descartes ever assumes transparency when it is understood in this second way either. To be sure, at the beginning of Meditation II he takes it to be epistemically possible that he is immaterial. But he does not assume there that he is immaterial. It is true that in Meditation II, having decided (on the basis of introspection, let us agree) that he is a thinking thing, he says that he is “not that structure of limbs which is called a human body,” nor is he “even some thin vapour which permeates the limbs – a wind, fire, air, breath, or whatever I depict in the imagination; for these are things which I have supposed to be nothing” (AT VII 27/CSM II 18). Taken out of context, this might seem to say that introspection alone has revealed to him that he is immaterial. But he goes on to say¹²¹:

Let this supposition stand; for all that I am still something. And yet, may it not perhaps be the case that these very things which I am supposing to be nothing, because they are unknown to me, are in reality identical with the “I” of which I am aware? I do not know. (AT VII 27/CSM II 18)

So at this stage, Descartes claims *not* to know whether he is immaterial. Yet if he accepted transparency as we are currently understanding it, he could at this point claim to know that he is immaterial. But he does not claim to have established immaterialism until Meditation VI. And the argument by which he does so relies on more than introspection; for example, it appeals to the existence of something outside himself – namely, God (AT VII 78/CSM II 54).¹²²

But perhaps in speaking of the intrinsic nature of subjective states, McDowell does not mean to include their being material or immaterial.¹²³ Here, then, is a third interpretation of what he has in mind: that one can infallibly know the *contents* of one’s subjective states through and through, and by introspection alone. That this is what he intends is perhaps suggested by the fact that he identifies “the infallibly knowable fact” with “its seeming to one that things are thus and so.”¹²⁴ From now on, by “transparency” as McDowell understands it, I will mean transparency in this third sense.

First we should note that we have reason to hope that Descartes does not accept transparency in this sense. For if he does, he is inconsistent.¹²⁵ For example, this sort of transparency conflicts with Descartes’s views about innate ideas.¹²⁶ For he says that “when we say that an idea is innate in us, we do not mean that it is always there before us. This would mean that no idea was innate. We simply mean that we have within ourselves the faculty of summoning up the idea” (AT VII 189/CSM II 132. Notice that the passage says that *no* idea is always before our mind, not just that innate ideas aren’t.)

McDowell might reply that Descartes thinks we can become aware of our innate ideas. And, after all, McDowell says that, for Descartes, the subjective realm is *knowable* through and through by introspection, not that it is *known* through and through. However, McDowell seems to think that, according to Descartes, all our subjective states are *readily* knowable through introspection. But Descartes does not think that all our innate ideas are readily

knowable. He says, for example, that one could fail to perceive one's idea of God even after a "thousandth reading" of the *Meditations*, and he thinks many people are slow at geometry.¹²⁷ Descartes also says that we have some ideas we can't *ever* fully understand – not by introspection or in any other way. He denies, for example, that we can ever completely understand the ideas of infinity or of God.¹²⁸

Moreover, Descartes thinks we can have a clear and distinct idea without being aware that the idea is clear and distinct; we can also think an idea is clear and distinct when it is not.¹²⁹ I'm not sure how to classify the properties of clarity and distinctness. If they are relational properties, then it would probably be generally agreed that Descartes doesn't take transparency to cover them. But if they are intrinsic features of ideas, or are somehow built into their contents, then Descartes can't consistently accept transparency, even if it is restricted to the intrinsic properties of our subjective states or their contents.¹³⁰

It's also worth remarking that Descartes says that we can't be "quite certain" (*plane certus*) about *anything* unless we know that God – something outside ourselves – exists and is no deceiver (AT VII 36/CSM II 25). If we take him at his word, then he thinks that we can't be quite certain about *any* of our ideas through introspection alone; this places a limit on the sort of transparency claim he can consistently make.¹³¹

So if Descartes accepts transparency as McDowell understands it, he is inconsistent. Of course, perhaps he is inconsistent. Be that as it may, I do not think he is ever committed to transparency as McDowell understands it; if he is inconsistent, the difficulties lie elsewhere. To be sure, he accepts transparency in *some* sense. Consider, for example, his definition of thought in the Second Replies: "I use this term to include everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately aware of it" (AT VII 160/CSM II 112). Similarly, in *Principles* I 9 (AT VIII-1, 7–8), he says that "By the term 'thought', I understand everything which we are aware of as happening in us, insofar as we have awareness of it" (AT VIII-1 7/CSM I 195). But neither of these remarks implies that we know, or can know, the complete contents of our thoughts. To say that I am immediately aware of every thought I have may imply that I can discriminate each of my thoughts from one another; but that does not require me to know, or to be capable of knowing, the complete contents of all my thoughts.¹³²

Not only do Descartes's definitions of thought not commit him to transparency as McDowell understands it, but neither, so far as I can tell, do any of his arguments rely on that notion. To defend that claim properly, one would have to investigate every candidate argument in detail, which I do not have the space to do here. But to take one quite important passage, consider Descartes's claim in Meditation II that he cannot falsely believe that he seems to see light.¹³³ This says that some of his beliefs about some of his mental states can't be false. But that does not commit him to

the view that the complete contents of all of his mental states are infallibly knowable.¹³⁴

I have considered three accounts of what McDowell means by transparency: that one can readily know, through introspection alone (a) literally everything there is to know about one's subjective states, including relational facts about them; or (b) their intrinsic nature, including such facts as whether they are material or immaterial; or (c) their complete contents. I have also argued that Descartes is not committed to transparency as understood in any of these ways.

Even if, contrary to my view, Descartes is committed to transparency as McDowell understands it, he is not thereby committed to the FCCS; for the FCCS also involves autonomy. I shall now argue that Descartes is not committed to autonomy. If he is not committed to autonomy, he is not committed to the FCCS.

McDowell explains autonomy as follows: the "intrinsic nature [of subjective states] can be described independently of the environment."¹³⁵ The idea is that the contents of my subjective states would be the same no matter what things are like in the external world. The nature of the contents is in this sense independent of the environment: hence autonomous.

In Meditation I, Descartes seems to view autonomy as an epistemic possibility. For he takes himself to have various ideas, and he thinks it is epistemically possible that he have these very ideas whether he is "alone in the world" (AT VII 42/CSM II 29) or whether they are caused by, say, God or an evil demon. At this stage of his meditations, in other words, he takes it to be epistemically possible that the causes of his ideas don't affect their content; we can hold the content fixed and vary the cause. What the external world is like, or even whether there is one, doesn't affect the content of one's ideas: so far as Descartes then knows or believes.

However, McDowell seems to think that Descartes not only takes autonomy to be epistemically possible in the context of Meditation I, but also in the end takes it to be actual. Descartes may think that autonomy holds for many of our ideas. For in Meditation III, he says that "[a]s to my ideas of corporeal things, I can see nothing in them which is so great <or excellent> as to make it seem impossible that it originated in myself" (AT VII 43/CSM II 29). He also argues that his ideas of colors and sounds "do not require me to posit a source distinct from myself" (AT VII 44/CSM II 30). But he goes on to argue that he can have the idea of God, with its particular content, only if God exists and gives him the idea. Hence, he thinks that the content of at least one of his ideas is dependent on the existence of something outside himself. Moreover, the idea of God is just one of Descartes's ideas of something that has a true and immutable nature, and his views about all such ideas, not just his views about the idea of God, count against ascribing autonomy to him. In the Fifth Meditation, for example, he says that ideas of things that have true and immutable natures are not dependent on him

and could not have been invented by him (AT VII 64/CSM II 45). One reason he gives is that they have implications he did not foresee; indeed, they have these implications even if he never thinks of the ideas at all. This seems to leave open the possibility that the implications of such ideas are world-involving: in which case he is not committed to autonomy. Indeed, he goes further than that, and argues that all such ideas are necessarily due to God: in which case he rejects autonomy.¹³⁶ If he rejects autonomy, he rejects the FCCS.

Even if Descartes does not rely on the FCCS,¹³⁷ he might have a different view of subjectivity from the ancients. I have not ruled out that possibility here. But if the argument of this chapter is correct, there is one way in which Descartes's views about subjectivity are not *as* different from ancient views of it as they are sometimes taken to be. For contrary to what is sometimes said, the ancients are well aware of the view that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the subjective (and at least the Cyrenaics endorse the view), and Descartes does not articulate the FCCS.¹³⁸

Notes

1. Burnyeat (1982), 32; emphases in the original. (He also asks a third question, which I shall not consider here: "When and why did one's own *body* become for philosophy a part of the external world?"; emphasis in the original.) Burnyeat speaks interchangeably of subjective *experiences* and of subjective *states*. I take it that in speaking of subjective experiences, he means to be speaking of subjective states broadly conceived, including, for example, thinking. In asking whether the ancients think there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about subjective states, I take it that Burnyeat means to ask whether there are truths, beliefs, or knowledge about their contents, in particular, about how one is appeared to: see n 48. Though it would sometimes be more accurate to speak of the contents of subjective states than of subjective states *tout court*, I shall for convenience sometimes follow Burnyeat and speak simply of subjective states, or of the subjective.
2. (1982), 32. Elsewhere he says that "the first philosopher who picks out as something we know what are unambiguously subjective states . . . is Augustine" (28). But he adds that "the Augustinian precedent does not amount to as much as one might expect" (33). I shall not discuss Augustine here; I focus instead on comparisons with Descartes.
3. The view that knowledge implies truth is at least as early as Plato's *Meno* (97–98); cf. *Gorg.* 454d. I assume that Burnyeat is relying on this view, since he says that it is "the addition of truth [recognized by Descartes, but not by the ancients, as being applicable to claims about subjective states] that opens up a new realm for substantial knowledge" (1982, 32; I do not know what, if anything, "substantial" adds to "knowledge").
4. Burnyeat (1983b), 121–2. For the record, I agree with Burnyeat that belief involves accepting something as true, both in fact and according to the ancients (when they talk about *doxa* and *dogma*: even if *dogma* isn't belief as such, it is a

- sub-class of what we call belief). For a different view, see M. Frede (1987b) and (1987c). I discuss this issue further in Fine (2000).
5. Burnyeat (1982), 38–9. I assume that in speaking of “subjective truth,” Burnyeat means truths about subjective states or their contents.
6. Burnyeat (1982), 38 n 53.
7. Burnyeat (1982), 33. Presumably Burnyeat believes that Descartes also thinks there are beliefs about subjective states and their contents; but for obvious reasons he focuses on claims to knowledge. I assume that by “subjective knowledge,” Burnyeat means knowledge of subjective states or their contents.
8. Everson (1991b), 128.
9. Ibid., 141.
10. Sextus is the main exponent of Pyrrhonian scepticism, which is one of the two main schools of ancient scepticism. My translations of his *The Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (= *PH*) generally follow those in Annas and Barnes (1994), though I have sometimes modified their translations, sometimes without comment. The Cyrenaics flourished in the fourth and third centuries B.C. They are so called because their founder Aristippus (who was an associate of Socrates’) was from Cyrene, a Greek colony in North Africa. They are sometimes called “sceptics” (though not by Sextus, who takes them to be dogmatists: see *PH* I 3 with I 215). In a fuller version, I would also discuss the Stoics, since I think that they too are a counter-example to Burnyeat’s views. Here I have at least a partial ally in A.A. Long, who argues that Stoic *phantasiai* are, and are viewed by the Stoics as being, subjective. Though he doesn’t discuss the issue in these terms, he also seems to think they believe that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about subjective states and their contents. See Long (1993) and (1991), respectively.
11. Nor is Augustine: see n 2.
12. McDowell (1986), 137–168, sections 4–5.
13. Eliminativists, however, deny that there are subjective states.
14. Thomas Nagel (1974). This way of characterizing subjective states is accepted by, among others, M. Tye (1995) at, for example, 3; cf. 38. William Lycan, however, objects that the locution, “what-it-is-like,” is obscure (Lycan (1987), Ch. 7). There are disputes about whether what-it-is-likeness applies to all, or only to some, mental states, and, if the latter, to which ones. There are also disputes about precisely how to characterize what-it-is-likeness.
15. McDowell (1986), 155; cf. n. 31. It is disputed whether all subjective states have representational bearing on the world; there are also disputes about the connection between introspection and subjectivity.
16. McDowell (1986), 160.
17. Sydney Shoemaker, for example, argues that each of us has privileged access to our mental states, but he defends a weaker version of it than he thinks some Cartesians defend. See Shoemaker (1990); reprinted in Shoemaker (1996). In Dretske (1995), by contrast, Fred Dretske says that “[t]hough each of us has direct information about our own experience . . . , there is no privileged access. If you know where to look, you can get the same information I have about the character of my experiences” (65). It’s not clear, however, whether Dretske and Shoemaker use “privileged access” in the same way.
18. It’s disputed whether Nagel’s position ultimately allows subjectivity to be compatible with either materialism or functionalism. For the view that it does not

- allow this (Nagel's seeming claims to the contrary notwithstanding), see Lycan (1987), Ch 7. For the view that at least certain forms of physicalism or materialism can accommodate subjectivity, see Tye (1995), Ch. 2. Shoemaker argues that the existence of qualia (subjective features of experience) is compatible with both materialism and functionalism. See, for example, Shoemaker (1991), reprinted in Shoemaker (1996). This issue is complicated by the fact that materialism and functionalism are understood in different ways. Some versions are clearly not compatible with the existence of subjective states (for example, eliminative materialism); but other versions (for example, non-reductive or compositional materialism) are (in my view) compatible with it.
19. I've already mentioned Everson and McDowell (which is not to say that they accept *everything* he says). Others who accept at least part of what Burnyeat says include M. Forster (1989), R.J. Hankinson (1995), B. Mates (1996), and V. Tsouna (1998).
 20. I prefer "appearance" to "impression" as a translation of "*phantasia*," since it preserves the connection with *phainesthai*, to appear. ("Appearance" is sometimes used to translate *phainomenon*. I follow Annas and Barnes in translating it as "what is apparent".) I translate *pathos* as "affection" rather than as "experience" (Burnyeat) or "feeling" (Annas and Barnes). For whenever something undergoes something, it is affected in some way, but not every way of being affected is an experience, as that notion would normally be understood. When a stone is warmed by the sun, for example, it is affected, but we would not say that it has *experienced* or *felt* anything. Experiences and feelings are normally thought to be subjective; though *pathê* can be subjective, they need not be. I take *pathê*, in the contexts we shall be discussing, to be states rather than objects. I take appearances (*phantasiai*) to be states of being appeared to (rather than mental objects); as such, they are a sub-class of *pathê*. Burnyeat – in my view rightly, though the claim takes argument that I do not have the space to provide here – takes Sextan appearances and affections to be the same as Cyrenaic affections; see, for example, Burnyeat (1983b), 134–5. (The Cyrenaics tend to use "*pathos*" rather than "*phantasia*." But Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1120c, rightly takes Cyrenaic *pathê* to be *phantasiai*. [I take *kai* to be epexegetic.] Cf. *M VII* 192: *phantazetai*.) Though Burnyeat thinks that Sextan appearances and affections are the same as Cyrenaic affections, we shall see that he thinks Sextus and the Cyrenaics accord us different sorts of epistemic access to them.
 21. Burnyeat (1983b), 129–130 (I have omitted the transliterated Greek that Burnyeat supplies). Cf. 133, where I think (but am not sure) that Burnyeat's view is that the sceptic's assent to his impressions (*phantasiai*, appearances) is "the assertion of the existence of a certain impression or experience." That Burnyeat thinks the Cyrenaics take *pathê* to exist is clear from, for example, Burnyeat (1982), 27. I discuss Burnyeat's account of the Cyrenaics later.
 22. Burnyeat (1983b), 130.
 23. Burnyeat (1983b), 128. *azêlêtos* can indicate what "cannot be investigated" or "as a matter of fact is not investigated": *-tos* endings are ambiguous as between a modal and a non-modal reading. As Burnyeat's translation make clear, he takes it the former way. Contrast R. Barney (1992), 303ff.
 24. Burnyeat (1982), 39 n 53.

25. Burnyeat (1982), 26.
26. In the passage just quoted, Burnyeat seems to say not just that Sextus does not take such states to be objective (a claim that would be compatible with Sextus's having no concept of objectivity), but, more positively and strongly, that Sextus's view is that such states are not objective. If Burnyeat does not mean to say this, he has not given a reason, as he purports to do, for Sextus's thinking that such statements are not open to inquiry.
27. Burnyeat (1982), 27; emphasis added. Burnyeat's examples are from Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, XIV 19.2–3. Notice that Burnyeat continues to translate *pathos* as "experience," even though he is arguing that there is no answer to the question whether *pathê* are subjective. Yet it would normally be thought easy to answer the question whether experiences are subjective: they are paradigm examples of subjective states (even though, as we've seen, there is controversy about what subjectivity consists in).
28. Burnyeat (1980) 135; emphasis in the original. Recall that Burnyeat rightly takes Sextan appearances and affections to be the same states as Cyrenaic affections; see n 20.
29. As we've seen (n 3), Burnyeat seems to assume (rightly) that knowledge, both in fact and according to the ancients, implies truth. I assume he would agree that if the Cyrenaics allow knowledge of *pathê*, they also allow beliefs about them. Plutarch explicitly says that the Cyrenaics allow belief (*doxa*) about affections (*Adv. Col.* 1120E-F, quoted later in Section 5).
30. Burnyeat says both that there is *no answer*, and that there is *no clear answer*, to the question whether appearances and affections are subjective. In saying that there is no clear answer, he doesn't seem to mean merely that it is difficult to decide the issue. He seems to mean that it's irreducibly ambiguous or unclear in the nature of the case whether appearances and affections are subjective; the issue cannot be resolved. Hence in (B) I use "no answer" rather than "no clear answer." Though Burnyeat thinks the Cyrenaics claim that we know our affections, he does not think Sextus agrees; hence "some of the ancients." (Everson, by contrast, says that both Sextus and the Cyrenaics claim knowledge, or apprehension (*katalêpsis*), of their affections; see Everson (1991b), 141.) Though Burnyeat thinks Sextus and the Cyrenaics disagree about our epistemic access to our affections and appearances, he thinks they are the same states (see n 20) and that in both cases, there is no answer to the question whether they are subjective.
31. (A) seems more prominent when Burnyeat discusses Sextus; (B) seems more prominent when he discusses the Cyrenaics. Yet as we've seen (n 20), he rightly says that Sextan appearances are the same states as Cyrenaic affections.
32. Burnyeat (1983b), 134. Cf. 135, where he says that we cannot "split" the affection (*pathos*) into separate mental (subjective) and physical (objective) components. The moral to draw is not that the Pyrrhonist allows himself some beliefs about what is the case, but that scepticism is not yet associated with a Cartesian conception of the self.
33. Burnyeat (1982), 28.
34. In discussing the Cyrenaics, for example, he says: "which of these, the yellowing of the eyes or the looking yellow, is the *primary* reference of the perceptual report 'I am yellowed' "? Once again, there is no clear answer" (Burnyeat (1982), 28;

- emphasis added). This suggests that being yellowed involves *both* the yellowing of the eyes *and* things looking yellow; what's unclear is just which is primary. If being yellowed involves both the yellowing of the eyes and the looking yellow, then it is both objective and subjective.
35. It also conflicts with (C). For (C) says that the ancients lack concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, whereas (D) says that they take appearances and affections to be both subjective and objective – in which case they have concepts of subjectivity and objectivity.
 36. I shall not ask whether affections are both subjective and objective, both mental and physical. For my concern is simply whether they are, and are conceived by the ancients as being, subjective. If (D) is true, they are subjective and are so conceived by the ancients.
 37. This is largely because I think the evidence adduced above on behalf of ascribing (A) to Burnyeat is quite compelling, whereas the case for (B) and (C) seems weaker. ((D) agrees with (A) that the ancients think there are subjective states, and it seems to me more likely that Burnyeat intends (D) than (C); if that is so, then that is also support for (A) over (B).) Everson (1991b), 141, also seems to think that Burnyeat intends (A). So too does Barney (1992), 302–305. For the purpose of understanding Burnyeat, it's important to decide which view or views he holds. My own alternative, however, counts against all of (A)-(C) – and against (E)-(G), which I go on to discuss.
 38. Burnyeat (1982), 38; emphasis added. Notice that here Burnyeat speaks only about truth and falsity; he doesn't mention belief or knowledge. As we saw earlier, he says that the Cyrenaics claim to know their experiences, and he thinks knowledge, both in fact and according to the ancients, implies truth. But when he discusses the Cyrenaics, he seems to move away from (A) to (B).
 39. Burnyeat (1982), 38; emphasis in the original.
 40. The passage just cited mentions only ancient sceptics, but Burnyeat does not think their view here is idiosyncratic.
 41. Burnyeat (1983b), 121–2; emphasis added. This remark seems to go better with (A) than with (B). For it suggests that the ancients distinguish appearances from “real existents,” by which Burnyeat means “objective existence.” Alternatively, perhaps he means that for the ancients, only what is objective exists. But then, since Burnyeat opposes real existence and appearance, he would be committed to saying the ancients don't think there are appearances. Yet, as we've seen, he thinks they take appearances to exist.
 42. See the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1977), 10–14. Thanks to Fred Neu-houser for the reference.
 43. Burnyeat (1983b), 121, emphasis added; cf. Burnyeat (1982), 25.
 44. Burnyeat (1982), 38 n 51.
 45. Whether or not Burnyeat believes (F), V. Tsouna (1998) does so. She writes that the Cyrenaics “*redefined* the concept of truth so as to include the awareness of internal states” (60; emphasis added): that is, apart from the Cyrenaics, the ancients *define* truth so that by definition there can be no truths about one's subjective states.
 46. See especially Burnyeat (1983b), 137.
 47. Burnyeat (1982), 26; cf. Burnyeat (1983b), n. 8, which explicitly uses “anachronism.” Burnyeat's view is anticipated by C. Stough in her (1969), 142f, and

endorsed by McDowell (1986), especially sect 5. Cf. Mates (1996), sect. 9. Burnyeat's view may seem to be anticipated by Hegel. And, to be sure, the two views sound superficially similar. Hegel says, for example, that the sceptic's appearances 'had only the significance of a subjective certainty and conviction, and not the value of an absolute truth' (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. II (Hegel 1968), 343). And he goes on to say that ancient scepticism "was really far from holding things of immediate certainty to be true; thus it actually stands in contrast to modern Scepticism, in which it is believed that what is in our immediate consciousness, or indeed, all that is sensuous, is a truth" (347). As we've seen, however, Hegel has in mind a special concept of truth, such that by definition there cannot be truths about subjective states; but that doesn't seem to be Burnyeat's view. For an interesting discussion of Hegel on ancient scepticism, see Forster (1989), Part I.

48. At the Toronto conference, Burnyeat said he did not intend this argument. And, as we've seen, not all of its premises are consistent with everything he seems to suggest. However, as I've been in the course of explaining, the argument is suggested by some things he says; I also cite relevant passages as footnotes to various steps. Though Burnyeat doesn't put it this way, I assume he means only that the ancients don't think there are any truths (or, therefore, beliefs or knowledge) about the contents of subjective states, in particular, about how one is appeared to. (By the content of a subjective state, I mean, for example, *that I am appeared to redly*, where the *that*-clause specifies the content.) If this is right, then he leaves open the possibility that the ancients think there are *some* truths about subjective states – for example, that they exist or are subjective. If, however, Burnyeat intends or is committed to the stronger claim that the ancients do not think there are any truths about subjective states at all, then (4) would need to be replaced with:

(4a). There are no truths or falsehoods about appearances.

Given (4a), (2) can't be true or false, since it is a claim about appearances. In that case, the argument isn't valid, since one of its premises isn't truth-evaluable. (Perhaps some arguments can be valid even if not all their premises are truth-evaluable, but this one would not be valid if (2) were not truth-evaluable.) If, on the other hand, (2) is true, then there are some truths about what's subjective, in which case (4a) is false. In any case, in the text I shall focus on (4), and ignore (4a). In thinking about these issues, I have benefited from discussion with Keith McPartland, Fred Neuhouser, and Zoltan Szabo.

49. "‘Truth’ in these contexts *means* truth as to real existence, something's being true of an independent reality" (Burnyeat (1982), 25, emphasis added; cf. 26); "there can be no question of belief about appearance, as opposed to real existence, if statements recording how things appear *cannot* be described as true or false, only statements making claims as to how they really are" (Burnyeat (1983b), 121–2; emphasis added).
50. I argued in the previous section that this seems to be Burnyeat's view, at least some of the time.
51. See the last passage cited in n 49.
52. "... belief is the accepting of something as true. There can be no question of belief about appearance, as opposed to real existence, if statements recording

how things appear cannot be described as true or false, only statements making claims as to how they really are" (Burnyeat (1983b), 121–2). Perhaps, rather than (5), the point is that one can't believe *p* if one doesn't take *p* to be true; since the ancients don't think there are truths about appearances, neither do they think there are beliefs here. For our purposes, it doesn't matter which way the point is put.

53. "The addition of truth is what opens up a new realm for substantial knowledge" (Burnyeat (1982), 39 n 53). Or perhaps the point is that one wouldn't claim to know *p* unless one took *p* to be true; cf. previous note.
54. Burnyeat (1983b), 121. In addition to the passages I go on to cite, see also Burnyeat (1982), 33: "What I have ascribed to antiquity is an unquestioned, unquestioning assumption of realism."
55. Burnyeat (1982), 26.
56. Burnyeat (1982), 22.
57. Burnyeat (1982) explains idealism as follows: "Idealism, whether we mean by that Berkeley's own doctrine that *esse est percipi* or a more vaguely conceived thesis to the effect that everything is in some substantial sense mental or spiritual" (3). Cf. 8: "idealism is the monism which claims that ultimately all there is is mind and the contents of mind".
58. Burnyeat (1982), 26.
59. If there can be appearances about appearances, then some appearances can be true without correctly capturing how external things really are. For the sake of simplicity, we can leave this to one side for now, but see n 65.
60. Burnyeat (1982), 19. Burnyeat also notes (16) that Gorgias argues that nothing exists: again, the concern is with existence as such, not with an independent, objective, external reality in particular.
61. I'm not convinced that all of the ancients accept even (1'). Some of them, to be sure, think that *p* is true if and only if *p*. (See, for example, Plato, *Crat.* 385b7–8; *Sophist* 263b4–5; Aristotle, *Categories* 14b11–33; *Met.* 1011b26–29.) But "*p*" need not be about an object that exists (which is what Burnyeat seems to think (1') requires). "There are no unicorns," for example, is true just in case there are no unicorns.
62. See Burnyeat (1982), 26, cited earlier; cf. 8–14. Burnyeat discusses Protagoras more fully in Burnyeat (1976). I discuss Burnyeat's interpretation of Protagoras in detail in Fine (1998a). I discuss my alternative in my (1998b).
63. Burnyeat (1982), 11. Cf. 13: "the whittled-down physical objects have indeed no 'absolute actual existence' – they exist only for the subjects which perceive them."
64. Burnyeat (1982), 18.
65. Perhaps Burnyeat would agree, and say that, even so, Protagoras assumes that *p* can be true (for a person) only if it is about something other than an appearance, even if that something is private and can exist only if it is perceived. However, Burnyeat thinks that, for Protagoras, *p* is true for A if and only if it appears true to A. Suppose it appears true to me that I am appeared to in a given way. Then it is true for me that I am appeared to in a given way: in which case there are truths (or relative truths) about appearances. Perhaps Burnyeat would say that Protagoras doesn't allow appearances about appearances. Be that as it may, he clearly thinks that Plato, in refuting Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*, appeals to such

second-order appearances, and he doesn't suggest that in doing so, Plato relies on a notion foreign to Protagoras: see Burnyeat (1976). Even if Burnyeat thinks the notion is foreign to Protagoras, he plainly thinks Plato has it, so it is not foreign to all of the ancients, and in particular it antedates Sextus.

66. In terms of the lettered propositions discussed in Section 3, he also rejects (A), (B), and (D). Contrary to (B), there is an answer to the question as to whether appearances and affections are subjective: the answer is that they are not. This answer conflicts with (A) and (D), on which appearances and affections are, and are conceived by the ancients as being, subjective. Notice that even if Everson were right to say that the ancients don't take appearances or affections to be subjective (though I go on to argue that he is not right to say this), they might take something else to be subjective. I return to this point later.
67. *Katalêpsis* as such is not co-extensive with the most exalted form of knowledge, for which *epistêmê* is generally reserved (though it is arguable that *epistêmê* is a kind of *katalêpsis*). But even if it is not co-extensive with the most exalted form of knowledge, it goes beyond mere true belief in ways that suggest that it is a sort of knowledge, as knowledge is generally understood nowadays. Even if *katalêpsis* can, in some contexts, fall short of knowledge (a point about which there is controversy), it seems to be a sort of knowledge in the present context. First, *katalêpsis* is standardly defined as being truth-entailing (or is at any rate always assumed to be truth-entailing), so we may take it for granted that it is so viewed here, whether or not we include *kai alêthôs*. Second, it is explicitly said to be infallible, certain, and incorrigible. (Bekker deletes *bebaiôs*, but all the manuscripts have it.) If *katalêpsis* is truth-entailing, infallible, certain, and incorrigible, it counts as a sort of knowledge, as most people conceive of knowledge. (This point would be clear even if we delete *bebaiôs*.)
68. G. Giannantoni (1958).
69. E. Mannebach (1961).
70. For the relations among, and reliability of, the manuscripts, I have relied on Mutschmann's introduction. I have not inspected any manuscripts myself.
71. Nor is the point in 193 and 194 merely that it is true that one has a given *pathos* (which might be taken to be an objective fact, even if *pathê* themselves are subjective). In 193, for example, Sextus says that it is true that each of us is affected in a particular way, and he gives the examples of being yellowed, reddened, and doubled. This goes beyond saying that it is true that there are *pathê*; it imports a reference to how one is affected, to the content of the *pathos*. See n 48. It's worth noting that in 191, Sextus says that for the Cyrenaics, *pathê* are the criterion: and he seems to mean that they are the criterion of truth, not merely of action (cf. Cicero, *Ac. II* 20–1). This too, I think, indicates that they think there are truths about *pathê*. Cf. Tsouna (1998), 33ff; and J. Brunschwig (2001), 462–3. To be sure, to call something a criterion of truth need not imply that there are truths about it. However, given the Cyrenaics' overall views, if they take *pathê* to be the criterion of truth, it is reasonable to assume that they mean that there are truths about *pathê*. For a criterion of truth reveals something's truth, whether its own or something else's. The Cyrenaics think that *pathê* reveal *only* themselves; *pathê* are somehow self-revealing (*M VII* 194; Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1120E–F, discussed later). Hence the only truths they can reveal are about themselves.

72. See n 67. The Cyrenaics also think there are beliefs about *pathê*; see, for example, Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1120F (*doxa*). But I restrict my attention here to apprehension (knowledge) and truth, since Sextus does so in the passage on which I am focusing.
73. This is because Cicero, *Ac. II* (= *Luc.*) 144–5, tells us that *katalêpsis* was first used by Zeno, a Stoic. The word itself antedates Zeno, so presumably Cicero means that he was the first to use it for apprehension in an epistemological sense. Even if the Cyrenaics didn't initially use *katalambanô* or any of its cognates in a relevant sense, later Cyrenaics may well have done so. Tsouna (1998) remarks that if they did not do so, "it is difficult to explain thoroughly the frequency with which [these terms] occur in the evidence" (32 n 2). She suggests that they may have initially used *aisthanesthai*, *gignôskein*, or *gnôrizein* (32); cf. Mannebach (1961), 116.
74. Even if all our sources are wrong to ascribe this view to the Cyrenaics, it was clearly ascribed to them in antiquity. It follows that the view that there is knowledge of, and that there are truths about, *pathê* was articulated in antiquity, even if it was articulated only as a universally shared misinterpretation of the Cyrenaics.
75. See n 20.
76. These locutions are sometimes thought to have been invented by the Cyrenaics: see Burnyeat (1982), 27 ("devised"; cf. Burnyeat (1983b), 134–5); J. Barnes (1982), n 29 ("neologisms"). But in Everson (1997), 113, Everson suggests that they may instead be due to Aristotle (cf. Everson (1991b), 131–2). However, the chronology here is unclear. It is possible, though by no means certain, that the terminology was used by Aristippus the Elder. If it was used by him, then it antedates Aristotle, and may well be due to the Cyrenaics.
77. Everson (1991b), 130–1. He is actually discussing Aristotle, but he says that the Cyrenaics accept "Aristotle's account of what happens to us when we perceive" (131). As he notes (130 n 23), his interpretation of Aristotle is controversial. On an alternative that I prefer, Aristotle's view is that to receive the form of whiteness in perception is to be in a subjective mental state that represents some portion of the world as being white. For this interpretation, see T.H. Irwin (1988), Ch. 14; and his (1991). For criticism of a literalist interpretation of Aristotle, such as is held by Everson, see also J. Barnes (1971–2); and J. Lear, (1988), 101–116, esp. 106–116. Interestingly, Burnyeat's view of Aristotle on perception has changed. In Burnyeat (1982), he says that "it is unclear, and is still a matter of exegetical dispute, how literally (physically) Aristotle means to say that some part of me becomes yellow when I perceive yellow" (44). But in Burnyeat (1992), he says that for Aristotle "the organ's becoming like the object is not its literally and physiologically becoming hard or warm but a noticing or becoming aware of hardness or warmth" (21). He also argues that this noticing or becoming aware is wholly immaterial. Burnyeat's new view is criticized by Everson (1997); see also M. Nussbaum and H. Putnam (1992); Sorabji (1992), Part II. Though I reject a literalist interpretation, I do not think Aristotle takes noticing or being aware of something to be wholly immaterial. Receiving the form of whiteness is in some sense material, even if it does not involve becoming physically white. (I use "material" and "physical" more or less interchangeably.) It would be interesting to know whether Burnyeat has changed his view of the Cyrenaics in light of his new view of Aristotle.

78. Everson (1991b) may disagree: "the fact of awareness [is not] sufficient to import subjectivity" (142). His reason, however, is that "we are often directly aware of states which are certainly capable of perfectly objective description." This says that being aware of *x* isn't sufficient for *x*'s being subjective. My point, however, is that the awareness itself is subjective.
79. Which is not to say that it is the physical state of being made white. In the contexts of concern to us here, it is whatever physical state one is in when one sees, or seems to see white, a state that need not itself be literally white (which is not to say that everyone who sees, or seems to see, white is in some single sort of physical state; a range of physical states may be involved).
80. See especially Everson (1991b), 142–3. But see n 84.
81. See the references in n 18.
82. Peacocke (1989).
83. (1991b), 144. Once again one wants to ask: even if what one is aware of isn't subjective, isn't the awareness itself subjective?
84. Having argued this, however, Everson goes on to say: "I would not want to argue that all the relevant talk of mental states – such as anger or pain – could avoid the subjectivist's argument in this way . . . In these cases, the communion of sense and reference would be lost" (1991b, 145 n 55). So it seems that Everson does not think the ancients entirely eliminate subjectivity after all.
85. Burnyeat (1983b), 135. This passage seems to express (B), discussed in Section 3.
86. Sextus here paraphrases Euripides, *Bacchae*, 918/9. Two differences are worth noting. First, where Sextus says that the madman sees two Thebes, Euripides has Pentheus say "I seem (*dokô*) to see two Thebes." (Presumably Sextus has in mind the phenomenological use of "see," whereas Euripides has in mind the success use.) Second, Sextus but not Euripides uses *phantazetai*. Gary Matthews asked me whether there are any passages in which an ancient philosopher says, as Descartes does, that even in a dream one can know how one is appeared to; he thought that would be clear evidence for the claim that ancient philosophers think one can know one's subjective states. The present passage comes close to making the relevant point, since the Cyrenaics assume that even madmen have *katalêpsis* of their *pathê* (and for what it's worth, it's arguable that Descartes links the madness hypothesis and the dream argument very closely): not that I think one needs to make that point for it to be clear that one thinks one has knowledge of one's subjective states.
87. Which, again, is not to deny that these subjective states are also physical. Tsouna also argues that these examples are of subjective states. See her (1992), at 170, and her (1998), 24. (On 24–5, she notes that the Cyrenaics also use adverbial phrases like "being disposed whitely" [at *MVII* 192]; she takes this as further evidence that *pathê* are subjective, saying that "we could say of a piece of iron turning red in the fire that 'it is reddened', but we would not describe a surface painted red as 'being disposed redly'." The same point is made by J. Brunswchig (2001), 461. We do, however, say that sugar, for example, is disposed to dissolve in water, so the mere use of such adverbial phrases doesn't seem to me to support the view that *pathê* are subjective, though for other reasons I favor the view that they are.) Unfortunately, neither Burnyeat nor Everson considers these examples. Sorabji (1992), 209, suggests that in Aristotle, only small-scale

sizes are received, but that hardly solves the problem. The claim that shape and size are an objection to a literalist reading was made already by Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* VII 7.4–15 (cited by Sorabji, *ibid.*). Are Aristocles' examples – being burned and cut – also meant to be of subjective states (the feeling of being burned or cut)? As we've seen, Burnyeat says "to that question no answer is forthcoming" (1982, 27). Even if one agrees with Burnyeat about Aristocles' examples – though I myself do not – it doesn't follow that there is no answer to the question whether being doubled when one sees, or seems to see, two things is subjective. My argument doesn't require *all* Cyrenaic *pathê* to be subjective; all I need is that *some* of them are. In fact, however, I think that all the examples are meant to be of subjective states. For one thing, the Cyrenaics don't mention any differences among the various examples; since some of them are – or so I think – clearly subjective, it seems reasonable to infer that all of them are. In the text, I also give further reasons for supposing this.

88. At least, they say this if we follow Mutschmann's text. But the points I go on to make do not require us to follow Mutschmann rather than Bury.
89. Note that the incorrigibility and infallibility at issue here (unlike the sort of incorrigibility and first-person authority that Burnyeat takes Sextus to advert to) involve truth. Though Plutarch doesn't explicitly use "truth," he says that beliefs about affections are infallible, whereas beliefs about external things are not; the clear suggestion is that beliefs about the former, but not about the latter, are guaranteed to be true. (I suppose one could say that something is infallible because it is neither right nor wrong. But *enargeia* suggests that the infallibility at issue here involves being truth-entailing. The explicit mention of belief also suggests that truth is at issue, since, again, belief, both in fact and according to the ancients, involves taking to be true. The idea is that what I believe, that is, what I take to be true, about my *pathê* is guaranteed to be true.)
90. Sorabji (1992), 209. Burnyeat and Tsouna speak not of the eye-jelly but of the eye. But if the Cyrenaics mean to claim that each of us is infallible about the physical condition of our eye, then the claim is even more obviously false, and would have been known to be false. As the case of blind people makes clear, it's not at all plausible to claim first person authority about the color of one's eyes. At least the color of one's eye-jelly isn't observable by others.
91. Sorabji (1992), 210.
92. The Cyrenaics seem to ground incorrigibility not only on infallibility but also on privacy:

For all people in common call something "white" and "sweet", although they do not have anything white or sweet in common. For each apprehends his peculiar affection, but as to whether this affection arises from a white object in him and his neighbor, he cannot say without receiving his neighbor's affection, nor can his neighbor say without receiving his. Since no common affection comes to be for us, it is rash to say that what appears to me of this sort also appears to the one standing beside of this sort. For perhaps I am so put together as to be whitened by the agency of what strikes me from outside, while the other person has his perception so constituted as to be conditioned differently. So what appears to us is not at all common. (M VII 196–7)

As Everson says, "[a]t first sight, it would seem difficult to read this as anything other than an argument for the privacy, and hence subjectivity, of experience"

(1991b, 130). However, he rejects this view in favor of the view that the Cyrenaics mean only that it is unclear whether anyone else's eye-jelly turns white in the same conditions in which mine does so (130–2, 143). But, again, the passage assumes that each of us knows what our own affections are like. As I've said, it would be bizarre to say that each of us knows the condition of our eye-jelly (or of our eyes), as described in physical terms. It's more reasonable to think that the Cyrenaics are adverting to the privacy of subjective experience: I know what it is like for me to see, or to seem to see, something white, but I cannot know what it is like for you to see, or to seem to see, something white. Not every sort of privacy and privileged access implies subjectivity. But in the present context, the alternative is that the Cyrenaics think we have privileged access of a very strong sort to the condition of our eye-jelly (or of our eyes), as described in physical terms. If we can avoid attributing this bizarre view to the Cyrenaics, we should do so; on the account I am suggesting, we can do so. For a recent discussion of *MVII* 196–7, see V. Tsouna, (1998b).

93. On my view, being whitened and so on are also examples of the right sort; being whitened, for example, is seeing, or seeming to see, white. But as we've seen, it's disputed whether that is the right account of the example. So not all the Cyrenaics' examples are *uncontroversially* of the right sort, even if they are in fact of the right sort.
94. Not just that they exist, but about their contents; see n 48. They believe it's true that, and that I know that (for example) I am reddened or doubled, where this specifies how I am appeared to, the content of a subjective state. Tsouna (1998a) agrees that Cyrenaic *pathê* are subjective, and that the Cyrenaics think there are truths and knowledge about them. But unlike me, she thinks that in doing so they redefined the then-current definition of "truth"; see n 45. She also thinks the Cyrenaics are unique among the ancients in admitting truths about (the contents of) subjective states; in the next section, I argue against that view. There are also further differences between us which, however, I do not have the space to explore here. That Cyrenaic *pathê* are subjective is assumed by Inwood and Gerson (1997) in their translation of *PH I* 215, which reads, in part, as follows: "Some say that the Cyrenaic approach is the same as scepticism, since that approach says that only our [subjective] states are grasped." J. Brunschwig (1999), Ch. 7 Pt. III, also takes Cyrenaic *pathê* to be subjective.
95. But they believe (2); hence we should reject Everson's (2'). Notice that my view does not count only against saying that the ancients believe that there are no truths, beliefs, or knowledge about the subjective. It also counts against saying that they do not believe that there are any truths, beliefs, or knowledge about subjective states. (These two claims differ, since one can fail to believe *p* without believing not-*p*.) For on my view, they hold the positive and explicit belief that there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the contents of subjective states.
96. This counts against (G) (see Section 3). Cf. Forster (1989), 16–17; cf. 19. Burnyeat says that "there is evidence in Galen that if the question ['At least I know how things appear to me, but do I know more than that?'] was raised – and it is not clear that it was often raised – then at least the more radical Pyrrhonists (rustic Pyrrhonists, Galen calls them) would actually deny that they had certain knowledge of appearances" (1982, 27). If, as this seems to say, the question of whether there is knowledge of appearances was sometimes raised,

then the issue was not foreign to the ancients. And if, as Burnyeat seems to say, some Pyrrhonists explicitly denied that they knew their appearances, then they explicitly considered whether there was such knowledge.

97. For Burnyeat, see n 20. For Everson, see Everson (1991b), 137. Everson, of course, thinks that both Sextan appearances and Cyrenaic affections are wholly objective.
98. For a different view, see Barney (1992), 304–5. Her main argument is that it would be dogmatic of Sextus (and so inconsistent with his scepticism) to differentiate between a subjective inner realm and an objective outer realm. She allows, however, that Sextus accepts *bios*, and it seems to me to be a part of *bios* to think that being in pain – in contrast to, say, being a rock – is subjective in some sense. Sextus can think this without having a *theory* of subjectivity or objectivity. Nor need we say that he *believes* that such states are subjective; it might non-doxastically appear to him that they are. Cf. *PH* I 4: the whole of *PH* records how things appear to Sextus to be at the time.
99. For an excellent discussion of this difficult phrase, see J. Brunschwig (1990).
100. *Pace* J.S. Reid (1885), in his note on Cicero, *Academica* II 76, p. 266; and *pace* Everson (1991b), 137 n 18.
101. *kai* in 215 might support this suggestion.
102. D.L. IX 103: *mona de ta pathē ginōskomen*.
103. One might argue that one can have knowledge even if one lacks belief: on some views, knowledge and belief are mutually exclusive. But it would be implausible in the extreme to argue that ancient sceptics claim to know, but not to have beliefs about, the contents of their mental states.
104. The interpretation of I 13 is much disputed. I defend my interpretation, and contrast it with others, in Fine (2000).
105. Sextus' examples – being heated and chilled (*thermainomenos* and *psuchomenos*) – recall the Cyrenaics' terminology (being doubled, and so on). Just as there is dispute about whether the Cyrenaics have in mind states that are wholly and only objective (as Everson believes) or states that are subjective (as I believe), so there are disputes about whether Sextus's example is just being heated in a purely physical sense or feeling warm (a subjective state that, of course, might be identical to or constituted by a physical one). In Fine (2000), I argue that he has in mind a subjective state. Contrast Burnyeat (1983), 134; and Frede (1987b), 196–7.
106. I assume that belief (both in fact and according to the ancients) involves taking to be true. See n 4.
107. There is evidently a potential problem in *claiming* to have no beliefs. But I shall not discuss that issue here.
108. Moreover, even if Pyrrhonists claim that no one actually knows how one is appeared to, they might leave open the possibility that one could have knowledge here; to deny that knowledge is possible here would be negative dogmatism of a sort Pyrrhonists eschew (*PH* I 1–3). One might argue that this possibility never occurred to them, but that seems unlikely, given Sextus's account of the Cyrenaics.
109. Nor does it originate with Augustine: see n 2.
110. 149. McDowell agrees with Burnyeat that ancient sceptics restrict truth “to how things are ... in the world about us, so that how things seem to us is

not envisaged as something there might be truth about ... whereas Descartes extends the range of truth and knowability to the appearances on the basis of which we naively think we know about the ordinary world" (148). But he argues that "the newly radical character of Cartesian scepticism" (148) requires Descartes to do more than that. I shall not explore possible connections between subjectivity and scepticism in this chapter (though I do so in "Sextus and External World Scepticism," forthcoming in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 2003). But if I'm right to say (as I shall) that Descartes never describes subjectivity as McDowell claims he does, then either that sort of subjectivity is not needed for the sort of scepticism Descartes considers, or else Descartes never entertains the sort of scepticism McDowell associates with him.

111. McDowell (1986), 150–1.
112. For "infallibly knowable," see, for example, *ibid.*, 150. For the second part of the quotation, see 155.
113. "Autonomous" occurs on, for example, *ibid.*, 154 and 155.
114. *Ibid.*, 152. Cf. 151: "a self-contained ... realm, in which things are as they independently of external reality (if any)."
115. Descartes could at some stage assume the FCCS without endorsing it. For example, the sceptical arguments in Meditation I rely on various assumptions Descartes goes on to reject, so one might argue that Descartes assumes the FCCS for the purpose of articulating sceptical arguments, even though he does not in the end endorse it in his own right. McDowell seems to think that the FCCS underlies Meditation I since, as we've seen, he thinks Cartesian scepticism relies on it. (An alternative is that by "Cartesian scepticism," McDowell means, not the position Descartes finds himself in in the end of Meditation I, but the position he finds himself in early in Meditation II, once he has achieved certainty about some of his subjective states. The difference between these two alternatives does not affect my ultimate conclusion.) (By "Cartesian scepticism" I mean the sort of scepticism Descartes considers in, for example, Meditation I: Descartes of course is not a sceptic.) McDowell also seems to think that Descartes accepts the FCCS in the end, though he does not cite any passages from Descartes. I shall sometimes ask whether Descartes relies on, has, or adverts to, the FCCS, where these locutions are meant to include both his accepting it in his own right, and also his assuming it in a given context whether or not he in the end accepts it.
116. I say "perhaps" because we would need to know not only that Descartes has the FCCS, but also that the ancients lack it. I shall not ask here whether the ancients lack it, but I do not need to do so if I am right to say that Descartes lacks it. If their views about subjectivity differ, the difference does not consist in the fact that Descartes has, but the ancients lack, the FCCS.
117. McDowell (1986), 152; emphasis added. Cf. 154: "The idea of introspection becomes the idea of an inner vision, scanning a region of reality which is *wholly available* to its gaze" (emphasis added).
118. For example, his argument for the claim that bodies cause his sensory ideas of bodies includes the premise that God is no deceiver. Though Descartes may claim to know this *a priori*, he doesn't know it through introspection. Or so it seems to me: but both "*a priori*" and "introspection" are used in many different

- ways. (In speaking of sensory ideas of bodies, I don't mean to include cases of merely seeming to see: Descartes of course doesn't think that on every occasion on which he seems to see a corporeal object, his idea is caused by a corporeal object.)
119. See, for example, McDowell (1986), 151: "the inner realm, whose *intrinsic nature* should be knowable through and through" (emphasis added). Compare this with a related interpretation of transparency that M. Wilson considers in her (1978): (3), on 154, though her version considers whether the intrinsic nature of subjective states is *known*, whereas McDowell focuses on *knowability*.
 120. McDowell (1986), 154. McDowell adds, however, that the sorts of epistemological considerations that, in his view, lead Descartes to endorse immaterialism "simply bypass the standard objection to Descartes's argument for the Real Distinction" (154 n 30).
 121. See also his reply to Gassendi, at AT VII 215/CSM II 276, where he reiterates that in the Second Meditation, he did not mean to assert that he is incorporeal.
 122. It is true, however, that Descartes says that were he not looking for knowledge out of the ordinary, he could have concluded in Meditation II that he is immaterial (AT VII 226/CSM II 159). (Even so, I don't think the argument, insofar as there is one for that claim in Meditation II, requires transparency in the sense currently being discussed.) And one might argue that Descartes thinks we can know through introspection that God exists. Again, however (see n 118), it seems better to say that he claims to know this *a priori* than that he claims to know it through introspection. Interestingly, in a letter to Mersenne (AT III 273/CSM III 165–6), he says that transparency (of some sort) "follows from the fact that the soul is distinct from the body and that its essence is to think": hence presumably transparency (of that sort) doesn't ground his argument for the real distinction, and is not being assumed as early as Meditation I or II, where the claim that mind and body are really distinct has not yet been defended. (The letter, though, speaks of distinctness, not of the real distinction; I do not know whether this is significant.)
 123. But why, then, does he say that on the FCCS "immaterialism seems unavoidable" (McDowell 1986, 154)?
 124. *Ibid.*, 151. On what I mean by the "content of a subjective state," see n 1. As I noted in notes 1, 48, Burnyeat also seems to be asking whether there are truths, beliefs, and knowledge about the contents of one's subjective states – that is, about how one is appeared to, how things seem to one to be (where "things" carries no existential import).
 125. For the view that Descartes is inconsistent on the issue of transparency, see, for example, Wilson (1978), 150–65, and E.M. Curley (1978), Ch. 7, Part I. For the view that he is not inconsistent here, and is never committed to as strong a version of transparency as he is sometimes taken to be committed to, see R. McRae (1972a) and D. Radner (1988). It is worth nothing that though Wilson and Curley think Descartes is inconsistent about transparency, they do not suggest that he is ever committed to transparency in as strong a sense as McDowell takes him to be committed to. The weaker the sort of transparency to which Descartes is committed, the less glaring the inconsistency (if there is one). Hence, even if Descartes is inconsistent, we have reason to hope he is never committed to transparency as McDowell understands it. For a recent challenge

- to the view that Descartes is committed to a strong form of transparency, see J. Cottingham (1998).
126. McRae, (1972a), 67ff. (cf. his (1972b)), argues that once we properly understand Descartes's account of thought, we can see that there is no inconsistency; this is because he takes Descartes to have a considerably weaker notion of transparency than McDowell takes him to have. Wilson (1978), by contrast, argues that "in the end the doctrine of epistemological transparency cannot be reconciled with other central features of Descartes's philosophy, including the conception of 'confused perception', and his treatment of innate ideas" (150–1). She thinks this at least in part because she ascribes to Descartes a stronger notion of transparency than McRae does – though a weaker one than McDowell ascribes to him.
 127. For the remark about God, see AT III 430/CSM III 194; cf. AT VIIIB 166–7/CSM III 222–3, which also discusses geometry (and interestingly compares his own views with Plato's in the *Meno*). The point about God and geometry is also made by Wilson (1978), 158. Cynthia MacDonald has objected to me that this shows only that people don't have complete knowledge of the correct concept of, for example, God; for all that, Descartes might think that we have, or can have, complete knowledge of the concepts we actually have. Perhaps my concept of God just isn't the correct one. Relatedly, James van Cleve has objected that if ideas are conceived of platonistically, then ignorance of them is not *eo ipso* ignorance of mental content. However, Descartes thinks the idea of God is in him; indeed, it is "the truest and most clear and distinct of all [his] ideas" (AT VII 46/CSM II 32). He seems to assume that he in some sense has the correct concept; it's just that its nature isn't completely clear to him. That he assumes this is also suggested by his view that the idea of God is innate and God-given. God didn't implant in us an imperfect concept of himself; he gave us the correct concept, which, however, we can't fully understand. However, Descartes uses "idea" in more than one way, and ideas are not clearly parts of mental contents on every way of conceiving of them.
 128. In his terminology, we cannot have adequate knowledge of the idea of God. Some relevant passages: AT VII 140/CSM II 100; AT VII 113/CSM II 81; AT VII 152/CSM II 108; AT VII 209–10/CSM II 273; AT VII 220ff/CSM II 155ff. It's especially interesting that Descartes says this, given that he also takes the idea of God to be the clearest and most distinct of all his ideas (see previous note).
 129. See, for example, AT VII 461–2/CSM II 310, where Descartes distinguishes what is clearly and distinctly perceived from what merely seems to be clearly and distinctly perceived; only the former, he thinks, is guaranteed to be true.
 130. Clarity, as defined in *Principles* I 45, seems to be intrinsic; I'm less sure about distinctness. See AT VIII-1, 22/CSM I 207–8: "I call a perception 'clear' when it is present and accessible to the attentive mind . . . I call a perception 'distinct' if, as well as being clear, it is so sharply separated from all other perceptions that it contains within itself only what is clear". Wilson (1978), 155, takes clarity and distinctness to be intrinsic features of ideas. One might say that the difficulties about clarity and distinctness show only that we don't always in fact know which of our ideas are clear and distinct; but McDowell only needs the claim that we can know this. But though Descartes certainly thinks one can improve one's

ability to discriminate clear and distinct perceptions from others, he doesn't seem to think one can become infallible about this.

131. One might argue that Descartes means only that we can't know that we have complete knowledge of the contents of our ideas unless we know that God exists and is no deceiver; the knowledge is, at it were, second-order. But even this, I think, raises difficulties for McDowell. One might also argue that "anything" isn't to be taken quite literally. Wilson (1978), for example, argues that Descartes assumes that *cogitatio*-judgments "are impervious to the Deceiver Hypothesis" (143; cf. 59–60; see also the last sentence of her n 85). Even if she is right, it wouldn't show, nor does Wilson think it shows, that Descartes is thereby committed to the sort of transparency currently under discussion.
132. It's worth noting that Descartes sometimes explains thought more weakly than he does in the passages just cited. In the First Replies, for example, he says that he affirms "with certainty that there can be nothing within me of which I am not *in some way* aware" (AT VII 107/CSM II 77; emphasis added; *pro certo affirmare nihil in me, cuius nullo modo sum conscius, esse posse*). The French version says that he will take it to be certain that there "can be nothing in me of which I do not have *some* knowledge" (AT IX 85; emphasis added; *tenir pour certain que rien ne peut être en moi, dont je n'ai quelque connaissance*). These latter two remarks plainly do not commit Descartes to the view that one can know the complete contents of one's subjective states. The following passage should also be noted:

As to the fact that there can be nothing in the mind, insofar as it is a thinking thing, of which it is not aware, this seems to me to be self-evident. For there is nothing that we can understand to be in the mind, regarded in this way, that is not a thought or dependent on a thought. If it were not a thought or dependent on a thought it would not belong to the mind *qua* thinking thing; and we cannot have any thought of which we are not aware at the very moment when it is in us. In view of this I do not doubt that the mind begins to think as soon as it is implanted in the body of an infant, and that it is immediately aware of its thoughts, even though it does not remember this afterwards because the impressions of those thoughts do not remain in the memory. (Fourth Replies; AT VII 246/CSM II 171–2).

This might seem to express transparency as McDowell understands it. However, like the passages just discussed in the text, it too can be understood as saying no more than that we are aware of all our thoughts, in the sense that we must be able to fasten on to a distinguishing mark of each of them. That does not require us to be aware, or to be able to be aware, of the complete contents of any of our thoughts. If, as I think, the passage need not be read as expressing transparency in McDowell's sense, then it should not be so read, since so reading it leads to conflict with what Descartes says elsewhere. Even if we take the passage to express transparency as McDowell understands it – though, as I say, I do not think it should be so read – we should not rely on it as evidence of Descartes's considered view, given that he doesn't elsewhere advert to or rely on transparency in McDowell's sense.

133. Radner (1988), 450, thinks the passage makes only a weaker claim; if she is right, that is grist for my mill.
134. For interpretations of Descartes's Meditation II statements on which he is not committed to as strong a form of transparency as McDowell takes him to be committed to, see Curley, *ibid.* ; and Janet Broughton (2002). I am indebted

to both discussions (and to Broughton for allowing me to read a manuscript of her book in advance of publication).

135. McDowell (1986), 152–3.

136. So far as I can see, this is Descartes's consistent position. I see no evidence that he is committed to autonomy. It has been objected to me that he accepts autonomy if God is left out of the picture. But leaving God out of Descartes's picture so seriously distorts it, that I do not think this is a profitable way of looking at the issue. One might also argue that the ideas at issue here are not parts of mental content. But Descartes speaks of them as being in him, and see n 127.

137. I've argued that he doesn't rely on it in the sense that he not only rejects it in the end but also doesn't assume it even dialectically in, for example, laying out sceptical arguments.

138. Predecessors of this chapter, or of parts of it, were read at MIT; Stanford University; the University of Michigan; Corpus Christi College, Oxford; the Pacific APA; the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand; the University of Toronto; and at a conference held in Delphi, Greece, sponsored by the European Cultural Centre at Delphi. I thank the audiences on these occasions for extremely helpful comments, especially Alan Kim (my official commentator at Toronto) and Myles Burnyeat (my unofficial commentator). I'm also grateful to Charles Brittain, Jacques Brunschwig, Benj Hellie, Terry Irwin, Fred Neuhouser, Sydney Shoemaker, Jason Stanley, Nick Sturgeon, Zoltan Szabo, the editors of this volume, and the members of various classes given at Cornell over the last few years, for helpful discussion and/or written comments.

Spinoza and Philo

The Alleged Mysticism in the Ethics

Steven Nadler

Let me begin this chapter with a simple categorical statement: There is no mysticism in Spinoza's philosophy. To most careful readers of the *Ethics*, such an assertion should seem unsurprising, if not obvious; Spinoza's place in the pantheon of arch-rationalist philosophers would seem to be as secure as that of his seventeenth-century mentor, Descartes. Thus, I do not claim that the thesis of this chapter is particularly bold or even novel. And yet it seems still to stand in need of demonstration. For from the earliest commentators on his work down to the most recent scholarship – and especially including the representation of Spinoza in the popular imagination – there has persisted a significant trend in which Spinoza is seen not as the inheritor of the Cartesian devotion to clear and distinct reasoning, nor of the Jewish intellectualist tradition of Maimonides and Gersonides, but as the descendent of the mysticism of Philo of Alexandria and of the later kabbalists.

At the end of the seventeenth-century, for example, it was not uncommon to see Spinoza's philosophy as deeply imbued with kabbalistic and occult themes.¹ In the eighteenth-century, Jacques Basnage, in his grand *Histoire des Juifs, depuis Jesus Christ jusqu'à présent* (1705), included Spinoza in his discussion of kabbalah, which he sees as the source of his "obscure and mystical" ideas.² Later that century, Solomon Maimon asserted that "kabbalah is nothing but extended Spinozism,"³ an opinion that the great twentieth-century scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Sholem, would later second.⁴ In the nineteenth-century, Victor Cousin insisted that Spinoza's "pantheism" came to him through his familiarity with kabbalah. Most recently, Ze'ev Levy adopts a more cautious version of this same general perspective. Despite his recognition of the importance of Maimonides to Spinoza's philosophical development, and apparently without intending to assert that Spinoza was an unqualified mystic or a kabbalist, Levy nonetheless believes that Spinoza's "pan-entheism" comes from earlier, mystical trends in Judaism. "The pivotal concept of Spinoza's metaphysics – the intellectual love of God – derives its origin . . . from mysticism."⁵

This temptation to see in Spinoza's metaphysics a mystically inclined pantheism (or, to follow Levy's preference, pan-entheism), perhaps deriving from kabbalah, has remained despite Spinoza's own harsh dismissal of kabbalists as "triflers [*nugatores*] whose madness passes the bounds of my understanding."⁶ Perhaps the fact that Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, one of the main rabbis of the Amsterdam Portuguese-Jewish community in the seventeenth-century, and possibly one of the young Spinoza's teachers, was a strong mysticist and – unlike his rationalistic and philosophically inclined nemesis, Rabbi Saul Levi Mortera – a devotee of kabbalah helps explain the persistence of this temptation. Fortunately, kabbalistic and other mysticist readings of Spinoza have been well countered in recent scholarship, which tends to place Spinoza in his proper rationalist context. The account provided by Richard Mason seems to me to be right on target:

Any philosopher who tells us that all individuals in different degrees are animate, that "we feel and experience that we are eternal" or that an intuitive intellectual love of God arises from an eternal form of knowledge has to be open to mystical readings, justifiably or not. But any mysticism [in Spinoza] is held in a firm grip. It is not mystical vision but logical proofs that are said to be the eyes of the mind. The love of God is to hold chief place in the mind; but it is clear and distinct understanding, not mystical illumination, which is to be the route to that love.

Yes, Mason continues, Spinoza is an intensely difficult philosopher to interpret. But, he insists, the "difficulties never derive from the obscurities of mystical traditions. Ineffability has no place in his thinking. Not only *can* we understand God but – surely in contradiction not only to most mystical writing but to almost all Christian and Jewish thinking – we *must* be able to understand God."⁷

I think Mason is absolutely right here. And it is my aim in this chapter to support the idea that the core themes of Spinoza's philosophy, and especially the *Ethics*, are radically opposed to any kind of mysticism. However, I would like to accomplish this through a set of considerations different from those that I have just mentioned. The issue of Spinoza's alleged mysticism can be approached not only through the question of his relationship to kabbalah, but also through a comparison with the Hellenistic philosopher who is arguably the greatest (and certainly the first) thinker in the tradition of Jewish mysticism, Philo of Alexandria.⁸

Spinoza was undoubtedly familiar with at least some of Philo's ideas. Philo is mentioned twice in the *Theological-Political Treatise* (*TTP*).⁹ Whether Spinoza was acquainted, first-hand, with Philo's writings is another matter. In the catalogue of Spinoza's personal library, there is no work by Philo.¹⁰ And the references to Philo in the *TTP* convey only a general knowledge of what Philo's views were on some specific issues, something that he could have obtained through the mediation of other works.¹¹

But I am not interested here either in the question of Spinoza's knowledge of Philo or in the question of Philo's influence upon Spinoza. Rather, I would like to use Philo only as a paradigm of pre-kabbalistic Jewish mysticism – an early and somewhat simpler form of Jewish mysticism, one unencumbered by the additions, modifications, and complexities introduced by later rabbinic schools¹² – in order to show that there is nothing more diametrically opposed to that tradition than the rationalistic spirit of Spinoza's philosophy.¹³ This is not to say that there is nothing in Philo's thought that Spinoza would have found attractive or to which he would have been sympathetic. It could be argued, for example, that Philo's account of the presence of the Logos in the visible world has its echoes in Spinoza's conception of the relationship of immanence between God and its attributes (especially the attribute of Thought), on the one hand, and the things in the world that constitute their modes, on the other hand. But such potential and particular points of affinity should not be used to mask more fundamental and essential differences.

My approach, then, is admittedly very unhistorical. I am not trying to show any concrete connections, positive or negative, between Spinoza and Philo. I have chosen Philo as my foil for illuminating Spinoza for two reasons. First, Philo was crucially important in the *Jewish* mysticist tradition in which Spinoza is so often, albeit mistakenly, placed. It is thus useful for my purpose in showing that Spinoza is not a (Jewish) mysticist to demonstrate that there is a great, even unbridgeable contrast between the thought of perhaps *the* central figure of that tradition and Spinoza's views. Second, Philo's mysticism is, despite its lack of systematicity, a *philosophical* or theoretical mysticism rather than an existential or lived mysticism. That is, Philo is more concerned with arguing for a set of ideas regarding a cognitive state of being – illumination – than with leading one through certain practices and experiences. This makes his project more amenable than other forms of mysticism for comparison with that of Spinoza.

Now there are a number of ways in which this project of contrasting Spinoza and Philo can be approached: for example, one could proceed through the notion, found in both philosophical systems, of the "love of God [*amor Dei*]" and look at the different ways in which it is understood. Or one could focus on the role (or lack thereof) of revelation in their respective theories of knowledge, law, and morality.¹⁴ However, to give my discussion a fairly precise focus, I will concentrate narrowly on only one, albeit vitally important issue: the knowledge by human beings of God and of the highest metaphysical truths. Both thinkers make the knowledge of God and of the principles that immediately follow from or are caused by God the centerpiece of their respective conceptions of human happiness or *eudaimonia*. But Philo and Spinoza differ radically – even irreconcilably – on the nature, the means, and the possibility of such knowledge. As I have noted, this should not be regarded as a novel or surprising conclusion. But

my analysis should offer a fresh perspective on, and help deepen our understanding and appreciation of, at least one of the ways in which Spinoza's philosophy is as far away from mysticism as a philosophy can get.

I. Mysticism and Rationalism

Mysticism can mean many different things in many different contexts. Even within the domain of religious philosophy alone, it can take a variety of manifestations. It might stress the epistemological and psychological importance of a direct, immediate, and first-hand spiritual relationship to God, one that is subjective, emotional, and highly personal, incapable of being communicated in words and possibly involving ecstasy or (to use a common term) "intoxication." Or it can involve various metaphysical claims about God itself and its relationship to human beings – for example, God's ineffability or hiddenness, the *deus absconditus* of many traditions, or, on the other hand, the intimate unity of God and creation – the "immanence of God" in nature – and the ultimate spiritual unification with God for which human beings may strive. Mysticism might also demand a certain cosmology and account of creation. As Sholem has pointed out, one should not try to define mysticism in the abstract, for it really takes on a positive content only within the framework of one religious tradition or another. "There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on."¹⁵

For my purposes here, in arguing that there is no mysticism in Spinoza by drawing a comparison with Philo, I shall use a working definition of mysticism that is narrowly confined to the epistemological domain. The mysticist is someone who argues that the human intellect or reason cannot, by itself and through its own natural devices, provide one with a knowledge of God – neither of God's existence nor of God's essence – or of the higher metaphysical truths that derive from God. Rather, whatever knowledge of God and metaphysical principles is possible for human beings – and the mysticist may be fairly pessimistic about how much knowledge of God we *can* achieve – is to be arrived at only through some non-rational means of apprehension and with the help of divine inspiration or other supernatural aid. My use of the phrase "non-rational" here is intentionally vague: it may refer either to the faculty itself that is responsible for obtaining the knowledge (that is, that it is a faculty or sense other than reason itself, such as "intuition," emotion, spiritual insight, or Pascal's "heart"),¹⁶ or to the procedure by means of which one achieves the knowledge, allowing for the possibility that reason as a faculty may somehow be involved in the process but operating in a manner different from its usual (that is, rational) one. Whatever may be the specific differences between varieties of mysticism, the generic foundation of mysticism lies in the claim that our knowledge of some ultimate reality – in this case, *divine* reality – cannot be had by our natural and (divinely)

unaided cognitive faculties. The mysticist believes that a direct experience and knowledge of God essentially transcends natural reason.¹⁷

Rationalism, on the other hand, is the view that human reason can, through its own devices, achieve a knowledge of God. The rationalist denies that revelation or any divine inspiration or aid is required for religious knowledge, nor does he insist that such knowledge requires the employment either of any non-rational faculties or of reason in a non-rational manner. While the rationalist may hold that knowledge of God is essential for human happiness, he believes that the human being is, through reason itself, naturally endowed cognitively with all that he needs to acquire that knowledge.

II. Philo's Mysticism

Philo is a notoriously complex figure, and his philosophy defies any kind of straightforward exposition, much less systematization.¹⁸ This is not only because of the sheer opacity of his discourse and the difficulty of his ideas, but also because of numerous apparent inconsistencies across his enormous *oeuvre*. So, once again, I limit myself here to some general (and hopefully incontrovertible) remarks on his views on the knowledge of God.

We can divide Philo's cosmos into three basic levels, with a different variety of human knowledge corresponding to each level.¹⁹ First, there is the sensible or visible universe, the external, created world around us. This world is subject to two types of cognition. First, there is bodily perception, the sensory apprehension of particulars. Second, there is the abstractive knowledge derived from our sensory acquaintance with things. While this second type of cognition begins with sensation, it ends, through reasoning, in abstract conceptualization. These two kinds of knowledge – knowledge of the external world and the sciences derived from it ("the learning of the schools") – are natural in the sense that they apparently require only our own sensory and rational faculties.²⁰

Immanent in the visible world, yet separate from it, is the Logos. The Logos is both a manifestation and image of God, who is above it and who created it, and manifested in and imaged by the world that is created in accordance with it. It is the intelligible universe or realm of ideas (also called *Nous*); it is also a copy of the mind of God itself (also called "Logos" by Philo²¹), of that which is a part of God's essence. The created Logos functions for Philo much as the Forms function for Plato. Everlasting and immutable, the Logos contains the archetypes and patterns of all things that come into being and go out of existence. Referring to the ideas in the Logos as God's "powers," Philo has God speak to humankind:

You men have for your use seals which when brought into contact with wax or similar material stamp on them any number of impressions while they themselves

are not changed in any part thereby but remain as they were. Such you must conceive My powers to be, supplying quality and shape to things which lack either and yet changing or lessening nothing of their eternal nature. Some among you call them not inaptly "forms" or "ideas," since they bring form into everything that is, giving order to the disordered, limit to the unlimited, bounds to the unbounded, shape to the shapeless, and in general changing the worse to something better.²²

The Logos, because it contains "the incorporeal species which are like patterns" from which the visible world was made, provides for the being and order of created things. It is an incorporeal, intelligible realm, and it represents the plan according to which God has causally ordered the world. "God, having determined to found a mighty state [the visible world], first of all conceived its form in his mind, according to which form he made a world perceptible only by the intellect, and then completed one visible to the external senses, using the first one as a model."²³ Through the Logos, God is, in a sense, immanent in the world. Logos is the Reason above and for things; Philo calls it "Wisdom" and "Law."

Human beings apprehend the Logos not with the senses nor even with discursive reason but with the intellect. Intellection differs from abstractive reasoning in that bodily perception plays no role whatsoever in the apprehension of the contents of the Logos.

God, apprehending beforehand, as a God must do, that there could not exist a good imitation without a good model, and that of the things perceptible to the external senses nothing could be faultless which was not fashioned with reference to some archetypal idea conceived by the intellect, when he had determined to create this visible world, previously formed that one which is perceptible only by the intellect, in order that so using an incorporeal model formed as far as possible on the image of God, he might then make this corporeal world, a younger likeness of the elder creation, which should embrace as many different genera perceptible to the external senses, as the other world contains of those which are visible only to the intellect.²⁴

At one point, Philo distinguishes between "those things that only the eyes of the body see," as well as the general principles that can be derived from sensory perception, on the one hand, and the "intelligible things" that "the soul sees of itself, and through its own power, [that] it sees without the cooperation of anything or anyone else, on the other hand."²⁵ The ideas constituting the created Logos are accessible only to the intellect, and the person who is "born of God" (as opposed to the person "born of the earth," who is devoted to the pursuit of sensory pleasures, and the person "born of heaven," who pursues the sciences and "the learning of the schools") has "raised himself above all the objects of the mere outward senses and departed and fixed his view on that world which is perceptible only by the intellect, having settled there and been inscribed in the state of incorruptible

incorporeal ideas."²⁶ To Moses, who sought to behold God's powers (that is, the Logos), Philo has God reply that

the powers which you seek to behold are altogether invisible, and appreciable only by the intellect; since I myself am invisible and only appreciable by the intellect. And what I call appreciable only by the intellect are not those which are already comprehended by the mind, but those which, even if they could be so comprehended, are still such that the outward senses could not at all attain to them, but only the very purest intellect.²⁷

Above the Logos there is only God itself, remote and transcendent but, at the same time, present in all. God is beyond both the visible world and the Logos, and yet, Philo tells us, "God is near everything." Through discursive reasoning, we can have knowledge of God's existence. But knowledge of God's essence – including the uncreated Logos – is, as we shall see, inaccessible to us.

Now, assessing the nature of Philo's mysticism involves examining the limits of human knowledge and the extent to which what humans *can* know is known to them through their own natural, independent cognitive faculties. I shall focus only on human knowledge of the Logos and of God.

Knowledge of the Logos is not granted to all; only certain individuals are fortunate enough to behold its truths – generally, they are prophets. And despite Philo's claim that the perception of the Logos and its intelligible contents is attained by the soul "through its own powers," and particularly through the intellect, it becomes clear that in fact, apprehending the Logos involves a non-rational procedure, and requires the direct aid of God. Philo does not grant the human mind either the ontological or epistemological independence that a thinker like Plato gives it.²⁸ In its being, the mind is, he insists, a fragment and copy of the Logos itself.²⁹ More importantly, credit for its proper cognitive functioning belongs to God. It is ultimately God who produces the knowledge that arises in the soul of a human being. This is as true for the lowest form of sensory awareness as for the highest intellectual cognitions.

He is but a foolish person who thinks that anything is in true reality made out of the mind, or out of itself. Do you not see that even in the case of Rachel (that is to say, outward sensation) sitting upon the images, while she thought that her motions came from the mind, he who saw her reproved her. For she says, "Give me my children, and if you give them not to me I shall die." And he replied: "Because, O mistaken woman, the mind is not the cause of anything, but he which existed before the mind, namely God."³⁰

The human mind will apprehend the Logos – what God calls "My powers" – only when God causes it to do so. "I readily and with right goodwill," Philo's God says, "admit you to a share of what is attainable."³¹ God is "the source of accurate thinking and unerring apprehension." He activates the human being's intellect and allows it actively to make contact with the higher Mind

and grasp the truths and laws that it contains. The human mind so “inspired” by God is “aroused and excited” and “goes forth with the most rapid motion to meet what is said.”³² The intellect is indeed that which apprehends the Logos – although it does so through an immediate intuition and not discursively – but it has this capacity only because it is itself a manifestation of the Logos. And it exercises this capacity only when God directly impels and allows it to do so.

There is for Philo, according to one scholar, a second kind of prophetic vision, one that needs to be distinguished from the “hermeneutical” variety just discussed.³³ The apprehension of the Logos is at times described by Philo as an ecstatic experience, highly emotional in its nature and requiring, as a preliminary exercise, the humble abasement of discursive reason and the human mind’s submission to God’s power.

While the radiance of the human mind is still all around us, when it pours as it were a noonday beam into the whole soul, we are self-contained, not possessed. But when it comes to its setting, naturally ecstasy and divine possession and madness fall upon us. For when the light of God shines, the human light sets; when the divine light sets, the human dawns and rises. This is what regularly befalls the fellowship of the prophets. The human mind is evicted at the arrival of the divine spirit, but when that departs the mind returns to its tenancy. Mortal and immortal may not share the same home. And therefore the setting of reason and the darkness which surround it produce ecstasy and inspired frenzy.³⁴

Here it seems not to be the case that the intellect actively perceives the contents of the Logos; rather, the prophet appears to be the *passive* recipient of the divine spirit. The apprehension of the message of the Logos is now even more of a non-rational, supernaturally generated experience in which one is immediately granted access to certain higher truths. It is an inspired state, wherein one is “suddenly filled with ideas falling in a shower from above and being sown invisibly, so that under the divine possession [one] is filled with corybantic frenzy.”³⁵ For such a divine gift to descend upon a human mind, however, requires the person to have made an active striving for the intelligibles.

Carrying its gaze beyond the confines of all substance discernible by sense, [the mind] comes to a point at which it reaches out after the intelligible world, and on desecrating in that world sights of surpassing loveliness, even the patterns and the originals of the things of sense which it saw here, it is seized by a sober intoxication, like those filled with corybantic frenzy, and is inspired, possessed by a longing far different from theirs and a nobler desire.³⁶

The possibility of human knowledge of the *eternal* Logos – the divine knowledge that is a part of God’s essence and on the basis of which God causes the created Logos to come into being – raises the more general question of the possibility of human knowledge of God. It is, of course, a question of the utmost importance, since the knowledge and vision of God constitutes our

highest perfection and happiness, our ultimate bliss. Indeed, the search for God itself, regardless of whether it is ever successfully completed, involves “untold joys and pleasures.” “The very seeking, even without finding, is felicity in itself.”³⁷

Philo divides the question into two parts: first, our knowledge of the existence of God; second, our knowledge of the essence of God.

Knowledge of the existence of God, Philo claims, is something that is available to all human beings, although not everyone will attain, or even strive for, it. “The answer to this question does not require much labor,” he insists, and yet still atheists abound.³⁸ There are two ways to perceive God’s existence. First, there is the *a posteriori* method. Proceeding as one would through the cosmological proof or design argument for God’s existence, one is easily and directly led to the knowledge that God, “the architect,” exists from an examination of the world, “this truly great City.” Just as one cannot “look upon statues or paintings without thinking of a workman,” so when one

beholds hills and plains teeming with animals and plants, the rivers, spring-fed or winter torrents, streaming along the seas with their expanses, the air with its happily tempered phases, the yearly seasons passing into each other, and then the sun and moon ruling the day and night, and the other heavenly bodies fixed or planetary and the whole firmament revolving in rhythmic order, must he not naturally or rather necessarily gain the conception of the Maker and Father and Ruler?³⁹

This method of knowing God’s existence, proceeding as it does by inferential reasoning, apparently produces only a probable opinion. Although I do not doubt that for Philo knowledge of God’s existence is attainable by the unaided human intellect, this kind of apprehension is surpassed by another,⁴⁰ one that produces absolute certainty. However, it involves a special act of revelation by God to the knower. What Philo calls “the God-seer” is someone who

has the power to apprehend God through Himself without the co-operation of any reasoning process to lead them to the sight . . . not His real nature, but that He is. And this knowledge he has gained not from any other source, not from things on earth or things in heaven, not from the elements or combinations of elements mortal or immortal, but at the summons of Him alone who has willed to reveal His existence as a person to the supplicant.⁴¹

Far from being the product of our own cognitive powers, the true knowledge of God’s existence involves a non-rational, divinely caused experience. It is, in short, an intuition that is the result of an act of grace.

In the great song there come these words as from the lips of God, “See, see that I am,” showing that he that actually is, is apprehended by clear intuition rather than demonstrated by arguments carried on in words.⁴²

The seeking of God, best of all existences, incomparable cause of all things, gladdens us the moment we begin our search, and never turns out fruitless, since by reason of

his gracious nature he comes to meet us with his pure and virgin graces, and shows [his existence] to those who yearn to see him.⁴³

The question of the knowledge of God's essence or nature is an entirely different matter. Despite Philo's strong recommendation that we strive for a knowledge of God's essence – he even asserts that it is good and right to do so and that “it calls for all the inquiry possible . . . for nothing is better than to search for the true God, for the very wish to learn produces untold joys and pleasures” – he also claims that “to inquire about essence or quality in God is an absolute piece of folly.”⁴⁴ This is because the knowledge of God's essence is simply beyond human reach. It will never be achieved. “The discovery of Him eludes human capacity.”⁴⁵ If God's existence is “not very difficult to determine,” knowledge of God's essence is “perhaps impossible.”

What is at stake here is a comprehension of the metaphysics of God's being: “What sort of being is this? Is he a body or incorporeal, or something exalted above these? Is he a single nature, a monad as it were? Or a composite being?”⁴⁶ Answers to these questions would require a special act of revelation by God, one that could only come in answer to prayer: “As knowledge of the light does not come by any other source but what itself supplies, so too You alone can tell me of Yourself.” Moreover, it is clear, from God's response to this petition, that what would be so revealed exceeds any human being's capacity to receive it.

Your zeal I approve as praiseworthy, but the request cannot fitly be granted to any that are brought into being by creation. I freely bestow what is in accordance with the recipient; for not all that I can give with ease is within man's power to take, and therefore to him that is worthy of my grace I extend all the boons which he is capable of receiving. But the apprehension of me is something more than human nature, yea even the whole heaven and earth will be able to contain.⁴⁷

The knowledge of God's essence is “out of reach” of any human being. All that we can achieve, as the reward of the search, is “to apprehend that the God of real being is apprehensible by no one, and to see precisely this, that he is incapable of being seen . . . there is not a single creature capable of attaining by his own efforts the knowledge of the God who truly exists.”⁴⁸

Thus, on two out of the three major questions concerning human knowledge – knowledge of the contents of the Logos and knowledge of the existence of God – Philo opts for a non-rational, divinely inspired intuitive apprehension. With regard to the third question – knowledge of God's essence – he insists both that divine revelation would be required and that human knowledge is impossible anyway. In all three domains of knowledge, our natural cognitive faculties are inadequate to the task. For Philo, the knowledge of God and of the highest metaphysical principles that derive immediately from God, when apprehensible by human beings, requires an

insight that, in its sources (and sometimes in its nature), lies beyond their natural endowments.

III. Spinoza's Rationalism

When we turn to Spinoza, things could not be more different. Any casual reader of the *Ethics* will see this. The format itself of the work, with its pretension to logical rigor and ostentatious employment of rational demonstration, displays Spinoza's unguarded optimism over the human being's natural capacity, with the proper method, to have full knowledge of God's existence and essence. Parts One and Two show clearly how one can arrive at a rational understanding of God and of the highest metaphysical principles that follow immediately from God – that is, at a clear and distinct understanding of substance, its attributes, and the infinite modes. And then there is the dismissal in the *TTP* of divine revelation understood as a truly supernatural phenomenon. Spinoza defines “revelation” as “the sure knowledge of some matter revealed by God to man.” But it is clear that, given his identification of God and Nature, revealed knowledge is, in his understanding at least, nothing but natural knowledge, “knowledge that we acquire by the natural light of reason.”⁴⁹ To be sure, there are “other means by which God reveals to man that which transcends the bounds of natural knowledge.” But Spinoza's intention in discussing those “other means,” when it is not to naturalize them, is simply to explicate or interpret the meaning of Scripture's authors, not to endorse any kind of supernatural revelation.

I shall focus here, however, on Parts Four and Five of the *Ethics*, where Spinoza turns to the importance of the knowledge of God for human *eudaimonia*.⁵⁰ And there can be no question that Spinoza, like his rationalist predecessors Maimonides and Gersonides, makes the knowledge of God the centerpiece of his conception of human happiness. “Blessedness,” he says, consists in the “intellectual love of God [*amor Dei intellectualis*],” which is nothing but a knowledge of God's essence and of the ways in which all things follow from that essence.⁵¹ And, as I show, the kind of knowledge of God that constitutes our perfection and ultimate well-being is an intuitive but intellectual understanding, through rational and natural means, of God's nature – that is, of Nature itself. There is nothing mystical in Spinoza's conception of the knowledge for which we naturally (that is, by our own nature) strive or of the means through which we can attain it. There is no room here for supernatural revelation, non-rational inspiration, or a human incapacity for achieving on our own the knowledge that is our *summum bonum*. To be sure, the intellectual understanding of God is an extremely difficult thing to achieve – as Spinoza says at the end of the work, “all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare” – but its difficulty does not at all derive from

either a supernatural character or the human being's innate incapacity to achieve it under his own power.

According to Spinoza, all creatures are essentially (and necessarily) moved by the pursuit of self-interest; they naturally strive for what will aid their self-preservation.

IIIP6: Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being.

IIIP7: The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing.

This, in fact, constitutes (for moral agents, at least) virtue. To act virtuously is to do what will most effectively serve to preserve one's being.⁵²

Now human beings, when they are acting rationally, strive naturally for knowledge. Since we are, among all creatures, uniquely endowed with reason and the capacity for understanding – that is, with intelligent minds – we recognize that our own proper good, our ultimate perfection and well-being, consists in the pursuit of what benefits this our highest part. But what else could benefit our highest intellectual faculties except knowledge? Thus, if virtue is the pursuit of what is in one's own self-interest, as Spinoza insists; and if the acquisition of knowledge is what is in our own self-interest, then human virtue consists in the pursuit of knowledge.⁵³

But Spinoza is concerned here not just with the pursuit of any ordinary kind of knowledge. Rather, what is most beneficial to a rational being is a particular sort of deep understanding that he calls "the third kind of knowledge." This is an intuitive understanding of things in their relations to higher causes, to the infinite and eternal aspects of (God or) Nature; in particular, to the "attributes" that constitute God's natures and the laws that follow immediately from them.

An unreasonably brief summary of Spinoza's metaphysics is required here. The universe is a single, infinite, necessarily existing substance (also called, by Spinoza, "God, or Nature"). Belonging to this substance, and constituting its essences, are an infinite number of "attributes" or natures. We have cognizance of only two of those attributes or natures: Thought and Extension. All real things, whether or not they actually exist in duration, are "modes" or expressions of one or another of the two attributes. What Spinoza calls "ideas" (which are simply things of a mental character, and includes human minds) are all modes of Thought. Bodies are all modes or instantiations of Extension.⁵⁴

Now the human mind, like God's attribute of Thought, is itself a collection of ideas. Some of these ideas – sensory images, "feels" (like pains and pleasures), perceptual data – are imprecise qualitative phenomena. They are, according to Spinoza's metaphysics, nothing but the expression in thought of states of the body as it is affected by the bodies surrounding it. Such ideas

do not convey adequate and true knowledge of the world, but only a relative, partial, and subjective picture of how things presently seem to be to the perceiver given the perspectival limitations of his physical place. There is no systematic order to these perceptions, nor any critical oversight by reason. "As long as the human Mind perceives things from the common order of nature, it does not have an adequate, but only a confused and mutilated knowledge of itself, of its own Body, and of external bodies."⁵⁵ Under such circumstances, we are simply determined in our ideas by our fortuitous and haphazard encounters with things in the external world. This superficial acquaintance will never provide us with knowledge of the essences of those things. In fact, it is an invariable source of falsehood and error. This "knowledge from random experience" is, for Spinoza, the "first kind of knowledge," and results in the accumulation of what he calls "inadequate ideas."

"Adequate ideas," on the other hand, are formed in a rational and orderly manner. They are necessarily true and reveal the essential natures of things. The second kind of knowledge, "Reason," is the apprehension of the essence of a thing through a discursive, inferential procedure. "A true idea means nothing other than knowing a thing perfectly, or in the best way." It involves grasping a thing's causal connections not just to other objects but, more importantly, to the attributes of God (or Nature) and the infinite modes (the laws of nature) that follow immediately from them. It involves, in other words, seeing how the thing is ultimately determined by the nature or essence that it instantiates. In the adequate idea of a particular body, for example, the body will be embedded not only in its mechanistic relations to other bodies, but also within the laws of motion and rest and the nature of matter (extension) itself. (In fact, it is these that render those mechanistic relations lawlike and necessary.) The adequate idea of a thing thus clearly and distinctly situates its object in all of its causal nexuses and shows not just *that* it is, but *how* and *why* it necessarily is. As Yovel puts it, in knowledge of the second kind we "explicate the object externally, by the intersection of mechanistic causal laws," until we achieve "a point of saturation . . . when a network of lawlike explanations has, so to speak, closed in on the object from all relevant angles."⁵⁶ The person who truly knows a thing sees the reasons why the thing was determined to be and could not have been otherwise. "It is of the nature of Reason to regard things as necessary, not as contingent" (IIP44). The belief that something is accidental or spontaneous – that is, causally undetermined – can be based only on an inadequate grasp of the thing's causal explanation, on a partial and "mutilated" familiarity with it. To perceive by way of adequate ideas is to perceive the necessity inherent in Nature. Sense experience alone could never provide the information conveyed by an adequate idea. (At one point, Spinoza suggests that the difference between an adequate idea of a thing and an inadequate one is not unlike the contrast between simply knowing a conclusion versus seeing how the conclusion follows from specific premises.⁵⁷) The senses present

things only as they happen to appear from a given perspective at a given moment in time. An adequate idea, on the other hand, by showing how a thing follows necessarily from one or another of God's attributes – either from the attribute of Thought, if it is a mental phenomenon, or from the attribute of Extension, if it is a physical phenomenon – ultimately presents it in its “eternal” aspects – *sub specie aeternitatis* – and leads to a conception of the thing without any relation to time or finite and partial perspective. “It is of the nature of Reason to regard things as necessary and not as contingent. And Reason perceives this necessity of things truly – that is, as it is in itself. But this necessity of things is the very necessity of God's eternal nature. Therefore, it is of the nature of Reason to regard things under this species of eternity” (IIP44Cor2Dem).

The third kind of knowledge, intuition, takes what is known by Reason and grasps it in a single and comprehensive act of the mind.⁵⁸ Where the second kind of knowledge moves discursively through various stages, from the initial starting point (causes) through intermediate steps to its final conclusion (effect), in the third kind of knowledge there is an immediate perception of the necessity of a thing and the way it depends on its ultimate, first causes.

This kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the formal essences of things. (IIP4oS2) The third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essences of things. (VP25)

Intuition synthesizes what Reason knows only discursively. It thereby generates a deep causal understanding of a thing – that is, an “internal” knowledge of its essence (in contrast with what Yovel calls “explicating the object externally”). Such an internal knowledge of the essence situates the thing immediately and timelessly in relation to the eternal principles of Nature that generate and govern it. This conception of ultimate knowledge is already present early in Spinoza's *oeuvre*, in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* from the late 1650s.

The essences of singular, changeable things are not to be drawn from their series, or order of existing, since it offers us nothing but extrinsic denominations, relations, or at most, circumstances, all of which are far from the inmost essence of things. That essence is to be sought only from the fixed and eternal things, and at the same time from the laws inscribed in these things, as in their true codes, according to which all singular things come to be, and are ordered. Indeed these singular changeable things depend so intimately, and (so to speak) essentially, on the fixed things that they can neither be nor be conceived without them.⁵⁹

Spinoza's conception of adequate knowledge reveals an unrivaled optimism in the cognitive powers of the human being. Not even Descartes believed that we could know all of nature and its innermost secrets with

the degree of depth and certainty that Spinoza thought possible. Spinoza's friend Lodewijk Meyer, in his preface to Spinoza's *Descartes's Principles of Philosophy*, alerts the reader to this difference between the two philosophers.

We must not fail to note that what is found in some places [of this work] – viz. *that this or that surpasses the human understanding* – must be taken . . . as said only on behalf of Descartes. For it must not be thought that our Author offers this as his own opinion. He judges that all those things, and even many others more sublime and subtle, can not only be conceived clearly and distinctly, but also explained very satisfactorily – provided only that the human Intellect is guided in the search for truth and knowledge of things along a different path from that which Descartes opened up and made smooth.⁶⁰

Most remarkably, because Spinoza thought that the adequate knowledge of any object, and of Nature as a whole, involves a thorough knowledge of God and of how things relate to God and its attributes (that is, God's essences), he also had no scruples about claiming that we can, at least in principle, know God.

IP45: Each idea of each body, or of each singular thing which actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God.

Demonstration: The idea of a singular thing which actually exists necessarily involves both the essence of the thing and its existence. But singular things cannot be conceived without God – on the contrary, because they have God for a cause insofar as he is considered under the attribute of which the things are modes, their ideas must involve the concept of their attribute, that is, must involve an eternal and infinite essence of God.

As we come to a greater understanding of nature – of things and their relationships to the attributes, which are simply the essences of God – we necessarily come to a greater understanding of God. "The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God" (VP24). There is a particularly fine expression of this idea in the *TTP*:

Since all our knowledge, and the certainty that banishes every possible doubt, depend solely on the knowledge of God – because, firstly, without God nothing can be or be conceived, and secondly, everything can be called into doubt as long as we have no clear and distinct idea of God – it follows that our supreme good and perfection depends solely on the knowledge of God. Again, since nothing can be or be conceived without God, it is clear that everything in Nature involves and expresses the conception of God in proportion to its essence and perfection; and therefore we acquire a greater and more perfect knowledge of God as we gain more knowledge of natural phenomena. To put it another way, since the knowledge of an effect through its cause is nothing other than the knowledge of a property of that cause, the greater our knowledge of natural phenomena, the more perfect is our knowledge of God's essence, which is the cause of all things.⁶¹

Moreover, it is thoroughly possible – albeit difficult – for us to know God perfectly and adequately. "The knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence

that each idea involves is adequate and perfect" (IIP46). "The human Mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (IIP47). No other philosopher in history has been willing to make this claim. But, then again, no other philosopher identified God with Nature.

We strive, then, to acquire the third kind of knowledge: an intuitive understanding of the natures of things not merely in their finite, particular, and fluctuating causal relations to other finite things, not in their mutable, durational existence, but through their unchanging essences. And to truly understand things essentially in this way is to relate them to their infinite causes: God (substance) and its attributes. What we are after is a knowledge of bodies not through other bodies but through Extension and its laws, and a knowledge of ideas through the nature of Thought and its laws. It is the pursuit of this kind of knowledge that constitutes human virtue and the project that represents our greatest self-interest as rational beings.

VP25: The greatest striving of the mind, and its greatest virtue, is understanding things by the third kind of knowledge.

Demonstration: The third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things, and the more we understand things in this way, the more we understand God. Therefore, the greatest virtue of the mind, i.e., the mind's power or nature or its greatest striving, is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge.

The third kind of knowledge benefits us to the highest degree and maximally "increases our power." It is thus accompanied by "the greatest satisfaction of mind there can be, i.e., Joy." Now whatever causes joy in us is the object of our love. And because the third kind of knowledge is accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, it follows that "from the third kind of knowledge there necessarily arises an intellectual love of God" (VP32). It is a love that is not a passion, but an intellectual recognition of our highest good.

IV. Conclusion

The project that Spinoza prescribes for human beings, at least as the key to achieving an ideal and lasting happiness, is clearly a strictly rational and intellectual one. There is no mysticism here. The call for an intellectual love of God – and especially of a God who is, metaphysically speaking, immanent in the world just because that God is the underlying nature of things – may strike one as similar in spirit to what is found in certain Jewish mysticist writings, and especially in kabbalah. But there can be no question that what for Spinoza constitutes both the goal and the mechanism of one's "ascent" to God is diametrically opposed to that of a true mysticist such as Philo. Whereas Philo requires divine revelation or supernatural aid for the human being's approach to the knowledge that constitutes his true good, Spinoza

has nothing but unfailing confidence in a human being's natural, unaided reason – reason acting rationally, in other words – to achieve understanding. And where Philo saw an irremediable human incapacity for knowledge of God's essence, Spinoza sees a perfect human fitness for a complete and total rational knowledge of God. Spinoza has no qualms about asserting that the human being, through his own natural cognitive faculties – and especially the rational intellect – and without any supernatural, divine aid, can come to a complete and adequate understanding not only of all of nature, but of God itself.⁶²

Notes

1. See, for example, the two books by J. G. Wachter, *Der Spinozismus im Judenthumb, oder die von dem heutigen Juedenthumb und dessen Geheimen Kabbala Vergoeterte Welt* (Amsterdam, 1699), and *Elucidarius Cabalisticus sive reconditae Hebraeorum philosophiae recensio* (Rome, 1706). According to Wachter, the Kabbalah is "Spinozism before Spinoza."
2. Book IV, chapter 7. Richard Popkin (1992) provides a possible explanation as to why other early modern figures believed Spinoza's philosophy to be kabbalistic.
3. See his autobiography, *Solomon Maimon's Lebensgeschichte von ihm selbst beschrieben* (Munich: George Mueller, 1911 [orig. 1792]), Part I, chapter 14, p. 162.
4. See Gershom Sholem (1941), 258.
5. See Levy (1989), 28. To be fair to Levy, he does insist that "the comparisons between Spinoza's thought and the kabbalah must, however, be treated very carefully and *cum grano salis*" (30). See also H. W. Brann, (1977), and H. Hubbeling (1977). C. D. Broad (1930) asserts that Spinoza's final doctrines in the *Ethics* are the "philosophical expression of certain religious and mystical experiences which Spinoza and others may have enjoyed" (15). Harry Wolfson is much more reserved. He does not categorically rule out kabbalistic influences. But he believes that many of the ideas that Spinoza could have derived from kabbalistic literature he could just as well have found in the philosophical literature; see Wolfson (1934), vol. I, 17.
6. *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 9; Gebhardt vol. 3: 135–6 (henceforth abbreviated as "G" plus the volume and page numbers).
7. Mason (1997), 3.
8. The question of the nature of Philo's own mysticism is not an uncontentious one; see David Winston (1982) and (1996).
9. Both citations occur in chapter 10.
10. *Catalogus van de Bibliotheek der Vereniging Het Spinozahuis te Rijnsburg* (1965).
11. For a brief discussion of the question of Spinoza's direct acquaintance with Philo, see Spinoza, *Oeuvres*, vol. 3, *Traité Théologico-Politique* (1999), p. 750, note 4 (and the works cited therein).
12. This is not to suggest that there is anything clear and straightforward about Philo's thought, which is notoriously difficult to understand and often contradictory.
13. Comparative studies of Philo and Spinoza are few and far between, and as far as I know there are none that offer an analytical and systematic treatment of their

views on particular philosophical questions. Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski remarks on similarities between Philo and Spinoza in his (1910), 222–3, but nonetheless remains cautious: “That [Spinoza] knew Philo is clear from the theological-political treatise. But one cannot speak of a penetrating influence” (222). In *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (1934), Wolfson indicates a number of similarities of thought and parallels between arguments or theses in Philo and Spinoza; for example, see vol. 1, 109–110, 316–17, and 243. He clearly believes that there was some degree of influence here. But elsewhere he argues that on the whole, the philosophy of Philo (for whom revelation is of central importance) stands in contrast to that of Spinoza (who, according to Wolfson, denies every form of revelation); see “The Philonic God of Revelation and His Latter-Day Deniers,” in Wolfson (1961). In his two volume *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (1962), he insists that it was Spinoza “who for the first time launched a grand assault upon [the Philonic philosophy]” (II.457). See also J. Sérouya (1969) and Seymour Feldman (1982).

14. For Wolfson, at least, this is the decisive issue.
15. Sholem (1941), 6.
16. Winston’s (1996) definition seems to point in this direction: “By ‘mysticism’ I understand the claim that a direct experience of the Ultimate Reality is possible through a profound awakening that takes place, however briefly, within the soul’s interior” (74).
17. See Margaret Smith (1980), 20.
18. Nonetheless, for starters, there is Wolfson’s masterful *Philo*, and, at a more basic level, E. R. Goodenough (1962) and S. Sandmel (1979).
19. See *On Allegorical Interpretation* III.31. All translations of Philo’s texts are by C. D. Yonge (1993).
20. Wolfson calls them “the natural order of rational knowledge”; *Philo* II.27. Even here, however, there is a reluctance on Philo’s part to grant complete autonomy to the human faculties. We must, he insists, always remember that God gave them to us and that “we shall take care of them as possessions of God, being well aware . . . that the master may, whenever he pleases, reclaim his own property” (*On the Cherubim*, Part II, XXXIII.117).
21. On the distinction between the two types of Logos, eternal and created, see Wolfson, *Philo*, II.226–40.
22. *The Special Laws* I.47–8.
23. *On the Creation* IV.19.
24. *On the Creation* IV.16.
25. *On the Change of Names* I.4. As we shall see, it is not clear to what extent the soul truly perceives the ideas “through its own power,” since God is needed to come to the aid of the intellect in order for it to apprehend the Logos.
26. *On the Giants*, XIII.61.
27. *The Special Laws* I, VIII.46.
28. And even Plato grants that the proper function of the soul is dependent on certain Forms, most importantly the form of the Good.
29. *Who is the Heir of Divine Things*, XLVIII.230.
30. *Allegorical Interpretation* II, XIII.46.
31. *The Special Laws* I, VIII.49.
32. *The Decalogue*, IX.35.

33. See David Winston (1984), 53–54.
34. *Who is the Heir of Divine Things?* LIII.264–265.
35. *On the Migration of Abraham*, VII.35.
36. *On the Creation*, XXIII.70–71.
37. *The Special Laws*, VII.36–39.
38. *The Special Laws* I, VI.32.
39. *The Special Laws* I, VI.33–34.
40. Philo says, dismissively, that “those persons are mere guessers who are anxious to contemplate the uncreated God through the medium of things which he created” (*On Rewards and Punishments*, VII.46).
41. *On Rewards and Punishments*, VII.44.
42. *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, XLVIII.167.
43. *On Flight and Finding*, XXV.141.
44. *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, XLVIII.168.
45. *The Special Laws* I, VII.36–37.
46. *On Flight and Finding*, XXIX.164.
47. *The Special Laws* I, VIII.43.
48. *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, V.15–16.
49. *Theological-Political Treatise*, Chapter 1, G 3:15. For a discussion of Spinoza on revelation, see Alan Donagan (1996), 357–74.
50. For the sake of brevity, I pass over the proofs for God’s existence in Part One. There can be no doubt that Spinoza, contrary to Philo, believes both that the knowledge of God’s existence can be had only through rational, a priori (geometric) demonstration, and that such demonstration is sufficient to establish God’s existence with absolute certainty.
51. See *Ethics* VP33–42. The translated passages are by Edwin Curley (1985), henceforth referred to as ‘C’.
52. IVP20: “The more each one strives, and is able, to seek his own advantage, i.e. to preserve his own being, the more he is endowed with virtue; conversely, insofar as each one neglects his own advantage, i.e. neglects to preserve his being, he lacks power.”
53. See IVP20–26.
54. The complexities here are, of course, notorious, and there are innumerable scholarly studies devoted to untangling them. Among the best are Curley (1969); and Henry Allison (1987).
55. IIP29Cor.
56. Yirmiyahu Yovel (1989), 156.
57. See IIP28.
58. I thus agree with Yovel when he insists that with the third kind of knowledge, “nothing new is added to the scientific information already possessed.” Both express “the same fundamental information”; see Yovel (1989), 156, 165–6.
59. G 2:36–7; C 1:41.
60. G 1:132; C 1:230.
61. Chapter 4, G 3:59–60. The translation is by Shirley (1998), 51.
62. I am grateful to David Runia for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

Hume's Scepticism and Ancient Scepticisms

Donald C. Ainslie

While all of Hume's readers agree that he is a sceptic – he calls himself a “true” sceptic in the “Conclusion” to Book I of the *Treatise*¹ and a “mitigated” sceptic in the final Section of the first *Enquiry*² – there is almost no agreement on what this kind of scepticism amounts to. I will limit my contribution to this controversy here to an examination of Hume's first engagement with scepticism,³ his exploration in “Of scepticism with regard to reason” (T.I.iv.1; hereafter SwR) of the argument that we should not accept the verdicts of our reasoning; I reconstruct this sceptical argument in Section 1. What Hume wants us to learn from this exploration has also been the focus of much debate amongst his recent readers. There are three main interpretive positions, none of which to me seems satisfactory, but each of which I will suggest contains a germ of truth.

First, some have suggested that Hume's argument against our believing the verdicts of our reasoning is meant to be entirely *ad hominem*.⁴ For, after he has presented it, he says:

My intention then in displaying so carefully the arguments of that fantastic sect, is only to make the reader sensible of the truth of my hypothesis, *that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures*. . . . If belief . . . were a simple act of the thought, without any peculiar manner of conception, or the addition of a force and vivacity, it must infallibly destroy itself, and in every case terminate in a total suspense of judgment. (T.183–184, I.iv.1.8; emphasis in original)

This suggests that the sceptical argument should worry only those who hold a particularly intellectualist conception of belief, not those like himself who take belief to be a matter of feeling. Since Hume later identifies the “fantastic sect” as the Pyrrhonists (T.657, Ab.27), I consider their view in Section 2 with an eye to what attracts them to the argument and how their conception of belief leaves them susceptible to it.

The problem with the *ad hominem* reading is that it leaves it unclear why Hume would continue to call himself a sceptic, even while disavowing the scepticism of the Pyrrhonists. Moreover, his aim in SwR cannot be entirely *ad hominem* because he seems to accept the cogency of the sceptical argument himself, saying that there is “no error” (T.184, I.iv.1.8) in it and that “all the rules of logic” (T.183, I.iv.1.6) stand behind its conclusion (I explore these claims in Section 3).⁵ He does also point out that we cannot follow the sceptical argument through to its logical conclusion: “Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determin’d us to judge as well as to breathe and feel” (T.183, I.iv.1.7). So his sceptically-minded interpreters conclude that his point is that we are fundamentally irrational; we cannot help but believe even while knowing that we ought not to.⁶

The problem with this interpretive strategy is that it fails to account for Hume’s mocking of the “total” sceptic who tries to live by the conclusion of the sceptical argument (T.183, I.iv.1.7). If the argument is wholly sound, then should we not admire him for his attempt to live rationally, his refusal to succumb to his recalcitrant nature? The sceptically-minded interpretation also leaves Hume with too nihilistic a position, given that the argument of SwR comes only one-quarter of the way into the *Treatise*. If we are as irrational as it holds, why should his readers follow Hume for hundreds of more pages as he reasons about such topics as the structure of the passions, freedom of the will, justice, and the virtues?⁷

The third school of interpreters, the naturalists, allow Hume to avoid the problems with the *ad hominem* and the sceptically-minded readings by suggesting that he wants in SwR to show that reason “has no rightful jurisdiction” over our fundamental tendency to believe: Reason’s support for or rejection of a belief counts for nothing if it is not seconded by our primitive belief-involving instincts.⁸ This interpretation allows Hume to say that his conception of belief is crucial in responding to the sceptic, as in the *ad hominem* reading; it also allows him to say that the sceptical argument is sound, as in the sceptically-minded reading. But he is now also able to say that its soundness has no normative force for us, given that reason is not here supported by the relevant parts of our nature.

The naturalist reading, however, has its own problems. In particular, how can Hume continue to treat reason as a critical capacity if this were his response to the sceptic’s argument? When reason dictates, for example, that we ought not to believe a claim, we are left waiting to see whether this prescription does or does not affect us: If it does not, it should not; if it does, it should. That is to say that, on the naturalist reading, Hume leaves us only with what we *do* do, not what we *ought* to do. Moreover, given that this reading leaves the sceptical argument intact, it leaves us in a position where reason’s particular verdicts are supposed to be given some credence, even while we hold that we ought not to accept its general verdict against itself. It is not clear to me that it is possible for us to sustain these two thoughts simultaneously.

I provide my alternative interpretation in Section 4. My view is that Hume wants us to learn two things from SwR. First, like the sceptically-minded interpreters, I hold that the sceptic is right in pointing out that our reasoning cannot be given an ultimate justification; it will always be *possible* to challenge it. But the sceptic is wrong to think that this means it is possible to challenge it *always*. For, like the *ad hominem* interpreters, I think that Hume's conception of belief makes all the difference: It allows him to say that reason itself does not persist as the sceptic tries to undermine it, and this means that the sceptic's attack ends up missing its mark. The sceptic tries to demonstrate that reason is not worthy of credence, but he really shows only that our capacity to reason dissolves when subjected to repeated reflective scrutiny. So I understand Hume's point to be that certain kinds of philosophical investigation of the mind can serve to obscure those of its features that were originally of interest. Failure to attend to this fact leads one into various philosophical pathologies, such as 'total' scepticism. The proper response is to recognize that philosophy is unable to answer some of the questions it poses for itself because any attempt to answer them would destroy the object of investigation. The "true" sceptic thus "points out to [philosophers] those subjects, where alone they can expect assurance and conviction" (T.273, I.iv.7.14). In Section 5, I give some reasons why Hume in the first *Enquiry* would find it useful to equate this form of scepticism with Academic scepticism.

1. "All Is Uncertain"

The sceptical argument in SwR is notorious. D. C. Stove calls it "not merely defective, but one of the worst arguments ever to impose itself on a man of genius," largely because he takes Hume merely to misunderstand the nature of probability.⁹ Hume says, for example, that because we have doubts about our demonstrative reasoning, "knowledge degenerates into probability" (T.180, I.iv.1.1) and that similar doubts about our probabilistic reasoning means that the likelihood of any claim ultimately suffers from a "continual diminution" until it disappears entirely, leaving "all . . . uncertain" (T.183, I.iv.1.6–7). If this means that our knowledge that, say, 15 percent of 35 is 5.25, is reducible to the point where all we can say is that $P(0.15 \times 35 = 5.25) = 0$, it is indeed a bad argument.¹⁰ How could a purported demonstration have a probability at all? It either is true or false with certainty, and so is not the kind of claim to which our notion of probability applies. But recent interpreters have clearly shown that this cannot be Hume's point. After all, $P(0.15 \times 35 = 5.25) = 0$ is quite clearly a belief, while Hume says that the outcome of the sceptic's argument should be a "total extinction of belief" (T.183, I.iv.1.6).¹¹

The proper way to understand Hume's argument has to do with the stance we take towards our reasoning; it only indirectly touches on the objects of our reasoning such as mathematical claims like "15 percent of 35 is 5.25."

The argument starts with the recognition that ‘reasoning’ can mean two things. It can name a process that takes place within us when we try to discover how (broadly speaking) things are – let us call this the *psychological* sense of reasoning. Or ‘reasoning’ can name a normatively laden activity that we succeed in only when we manage to get at the truth of things (again broadly speaking) in the right manner – let us call this the *authentic* sense of reasoning. Thus, when you try to figure out the appropriate 15 percent tip on a \$35.00 dinner, you are psychologically reasoning, no matter what result you come up with. But you only reason authentically when you correctly recognize that the tip should be \$5.25.

The question at the center of the sceptical argument of SwR asks how you can tell whether your psychological reasoning is authentic reasoning. Why should you give your psychological reasoning “authority” (T.182, I.iv.1.5) over your beliefs? Your psychological reasoning is the cause of your belief, and your experience tells you that psychological reasoning produces truth only some of the time. Since we err not infrequently (especially when calculating the tip after a nice meal), before we should be confident in the outcome of a stretch of psychological reasoning – before we should treat it as authentic – we should check it in light of our acknowledged capacity for error. Is our first reckoning of the tip *really* correct? Hume thinks that this checking process involves us in a different kind of reasoning. In figuring out the tip, we were using *a priori* mathematical reasoning, or what Hume calls *demonstrative* reasoning, in an attempt to achieve what he calls *knowledge* (T.I.iii.1). But in checking on whether our psychological reasoning is authentic, we are making an *a posteriori probabilistic* (T.I.iii.2) judgement about the likelihood that we erred.

This might at first seem to be an odd claim about how we check our mathematical judgements. When I want to find out if I have correctly calculated a tip, I usually continue to use demonstrative reasoning by simply re-calculating to see if I get the same result as at first. Or I might ask someone else to do the arithmetic; Hume himself says that the mathematician looks to the “approbation of his friends” and for “universal assent” to his proofs (T.180, I.iv.1.2). But he is right in saying that checking in this manner does involve causal, probabilistic reasoning, for the second calculation will count as a *check* of the first only if I assume that it would be highly unlikely for my or my friends’ psychological reasoning to misfire twice in the same way. And if the second calculation differs from the first, I will have to enter into more complicated reasonings – perhaps calculating for a third or fourth time to see if our psychological reasoning converges on one result, which will then be treated as authentic.¹²

The nature of the checking process is what leads Hume to assert that “all knowledge degenerates into probability” (T.180, I.iv.1.1). This is not to say that an authentic demonstration stops being a demonstration; it means that our confidence that we have succeeded in a demonstration can only ever be

probabilistic, as in "I'm almost wholly confident that I'm right on this, but it is conceivable that I'm wrong." Recall that for Hume, our being able to conceive of something's not being the case is a sign that we can only ever grasp that fact probabilistically (T.69, I.iii.1.1).

The sceptical argument gets its force because the process of checking iterates. Our estimation of the likelihood that we were initially right might itself not be authentic, for we might have erred in assessing the possibility that we erred in the first place, say by overestimating the reliability of our tip-calculations. And our assessment of the overestimation will itself be subject to a further correction, and so on until there is a "total extinction of belief and evidence" (T.183, I.iv.1.6). It is important to be clear on what he means here. It is possible that some of our reflective assessments of the reliability of our reasonings are positive (as in "I'm almost wholly confident that . . ."), but this is not enough to avoid the loss of evidence. For 'evidence' here has its eighteenth-century sense of 'evidentness' or subjective certainty. And even if a round of checking has a positive verdict, it still puts us one step back from our initial verdict; it distances us from the initial claim. As David Owen has reminded us, it was a common-place of early-modern logic to hold that the certainty of an argument was inversely proportional to its length and complexity.¹³ Hume's sceptical argument is meant to show that every argument should be infinitely complex, and thus we should have no faith in the verdicts of our reason.

But of course we do. No one can really succumb to the "total scepticism" (T.183, I.iv.1.7) that involves the abandonment of all beliefs. For, as we saw earlier, Hume thinks that nature has constructed us so that we cannot help but judge. Though we can follow the first few iterations of the checking process, we soon give up the argument, surrendering to our natural inclination to believe our reasoning. The question that has mystified Hume's interpreters is what he wants us to think of all this.

2. "That Fantastic Sect"

In the passage that is the source of the *ad hominem* interpretation, Hume suggests that 'total' sceptics' conception of belief as a "simple act of the thought" (T.184, I.iv.1.8) is what makes them susceptible to the argument against reason. Who, then, are these 'total' sceptics, and what is the problem with their conception of belief? Given that in the "Abstract" to the *Treatise*, Hume summarizes SwR by saying that "[p]hilosophy wou'd render us entirely *Pyrrhonian*, were not nature too strong for it" (T.657, Ab.27), I will answer this question here by investigating the Pyrrhonist school of ancient scepticism.

Hume was primarily aware of the ancient Pyrrhonists through the reports of Sextus Empiricus¹⁴ and Diogenes Laertius.¹⁵ In two of the batteries of arguments – the ten Modes of Aenesidemus and the five Modes of

Agrippa – that they describe the sceptics as having prepared in order to challenge the doctrines of their opponents, we find something like the argument of SwR. The fourth Mode of Aenesidemus involves drawing attention to how our judgements, especially those relating to sensory experience (*phantasiai*),¹⁶ are affected by the circumstances (*peristaseis*) of judgement. Sextus points out that when we prefer the judgement in one circumstance over that occurring in another, we must rely on a criterion (*kritêrion*). But what justifies the criterion? If it is used without proof, it is arbitrary, but if a proof is given, that proof must itself rely either on the same criterion – rendering it circular – or a different one, setting one on an infinite regress.¹⁷ The second Mode of Agrippa has a similar structure. Sextus says of it: “[W]e say that what is offered as confirmation of the matter proposed is itself in need of confirmation, and so on infinitely, so that not having a starting point from which we can begin to establish anything, suspension of judgement [*epochê*] follows” (P.H. i 166). Diogenes’ version of this argument runs like this: “In order that we might know that [there is such a thing as] demonstration [*apodeixis*], a criterion is needed; and in order that we might know that there is a criterion, a demonstration is needed. So, the demonstration and the criterion, each dependent on the other, are ungraspable [*akatalêpton*]” (D.L. ix 91). In each of these Modes, we find the general pattern of Hume’s argument in SwR: What allows us to tell whether a purported (that is, psychological) judgement is an authentic one? We either must dogmatically assert that it is, or enter into an infinite regress.

But despite the similarity of these arguments to the argument of SwR, it is hard to equate the ancient Pyrrhonists with Hume’s ‘total’ sceptics. The latter hold that “all is uncertain, and that our judgment is not in *any* thing possess of *any* measures of truth or falsehood.” They think that they can “forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light” even if experience has suggested that they always accompany another kind of objects (T.183, I.iv.1.7).¹⁸

Pyrrhonist sceptics, however, are not nearly this extreme. Sextus describes their motivation as primarily ethical. They eschew positive doctrines [*dogmata*], instead cultivating

the ability [*dunamis*] to set in opposition appearances and ideas in any manner whatsoever, the result of which is first that, because of the equal force of the opposed objects and arguments [*isostheneia*], final suspension of judgement [*epochê*] is achieved, and then freedom from disturbance [*ataraxia*]. (P.H. i 8)

These sceptics have learned that attempts to formulate doctrines almost always lead to frustration – either because there are no decisive arguments in support of the doctrine in question that defeat all of its competitors, or because holding to the doctrine is itself a source of anxiety given the opposition to it from others and from the world. And so they have decided that a life without doctrine is the best means to achieving a peaceful, unperturbed life.

Note that they do not even hold these claims as doctrine; they are rather the expressions of what appears to them to be the case (*ta phainomena*) (P.H. i 15). It is on the basis of this appearance that they respond to their rivals' attempts to formulate doctrine by showing that any argument in favor of it can be balanced by an equally plausible argument against it. Hence they think that suspending judgement on the issue is the best option, even while they remain open to the possibility of a resolution (*skeptikos*, after all, means investigator, and they also call themselves seekers [P.H. i 7]).

The Pyrrhonists were well aware that their view struck others as implausible. It seemed to many that it would be impossible to live after having suspended judgement on all things (the so-called *apraxia* objection). Diogenes makes this criticism vivid by recounting one story about Pyrrho, the fourth- and third-century-BC namesake of the later Pyrrhonists:

He was consistent with this view in his manner of living, neither avoiding anything nor watching out for anything, taking everything as it came, whether it be wagons or precipices or dogs, and all such things, relying on his senses for nothing. He was kept alive by his acquaintances, who followed him around, according to the school of Antigonos of Carystus. (D.L. ix 62).

The problem is that, as Diogenes immediately goes on to say, this description of Pyrrho is likely apocryphal, disseminated by those who wanted to discredit the Pyrrhonists. Diogenes reports that Aenesidemus, who revived Pyrrhonist scepticism in the first century BC, says that Pyrrho only "theorized about the suspension of judgement, whereas he did not actually act improvidently. He lived to be almost ninety years old" (D.L. ix 62). Sextus, moreover, repeatedly confronts the objection that sceptical suspension leaves one unable to lead a normal life, responding that even though he gives up doctrine, he continues to accept appearances (*phainomena*); in particular, the directions of nature, the affections, customs, and the arts are sufficient as guides for life (P.H. i 23). And included amongst the directions of nature are those causal appearances brought about by experience of the constant conjunction of particular kinds of objects (P.H. ii 100–102). Thus, unlike Hume's 'total' sceptics, who try to free themselves from even these associatively-induced beliefs, the ancient Pyrrhonists refrain only from making claims about the non-evident (*adêla*) structure underlying the appearances (P.H. i 13), while continuing to breathe and feel *and judge* about how things *seem* to them.¹⁹

We should not, however, be too surprised that Hume's 'total' sceptics are not a direct match for the ancient Pyrrhonists. For, as Richard Popkin has masterfully demonstrated, philosophers in the early-modern period often revived Pyrrhonist arguments for many different purposes, especially in connection with the religious foment brought on by the Reformation. Catholics argued that the impotence of reason meant that one should follow the customs of one's society – and the Catholic church – while Protestants said that it meant that one should follow whatever religious appearances one felt

within.²⁰ And so Hume would have been familiar with many contemporary versions of Pyrrhonism. Bayle's *Dictionary*, for example, contains arguments akin to that of SwR without the nuance that accompanies Sextus's presentation of the ancient view.²¹

But consideration of the ancient sources helps us to see why Hume thinks that a view of belief as a "simple act of the thought" makes one susceptible to Pyrrhonist arguments. Of course, this conception of belief is not the Pyrrhonists' own – they eschewed doctrine. But it is the view of belief held by their primary interlocutors and targets, the Stoics, who in their epistemology held that belief results from an act of assent. We stand over our impressions, as it were, and are able to withhold our assent to any of them unless it forces itself upon us; the criterion of judgement is what they call a cognitive impression (*phantasia katalēptike*). The Pyrrhonists' challenge was that for any purported such impression, there was another one indistinguishable from it that failed to present us with the truth. Putting it in the terminology I used in Section 1 to recount the sceptical argument of SwR, the ancient Pyrrhonists argued that any assent to a purported cognitive impression would be merely psychological, and thus would need to be authenticated by means of a higher-level act of assent. The Stoics developed sophisticated responses to this challenge, largely in terms of a complex story of cognitive development whereby in the natural course of our upbringing we acquire the capacity to assent only to cognitive impressions (even if only the Sage actually uses this capacity properly).²²

Hume seems uninterested in the details of this historical debate, presumably because just as Pyrrhonism had undergone a revival in the early-modern era, so too had Stoic epistemology. Descartes, most famously, and following him, Malebranche, made belief an act of the will, and introduced their own version of cognitive impressions – namely, clearly and distinctly perceived ideas.²³ So long as there is a separation of that feature of mind by means of which we entertain various thoughts from that by means of which we form beliefs, the argument of SwR can get a grip.²⁴ For the sceptic can ask: How can I be sure that this would be an authentic assent, rather than a merely psychological assent?

Descartes and Malebranche, like the Stoics, could try to escape the regress by arguing that there are some ideas to which we cannot help but assent, so that there would be no cognitive space into which the sceptic's question could be lodged. We are *passive* in such cases, unable to do anything but to believe.²⁵ This would allow them to escape the sceptic's threatened regress, but it is not clear that they are entitled to this move. The point is clearest with Malebranche. He says that the understanding presents to us perceptions of connections between things, and that the will must either consent to this perceived connection to yield a judgement, or direct the understanding to continue considering other information to see if the perceived connection remains plausible. When all such considerations are exhausted, we

are "obliged to rest with what the understanding has already represented" (ST.I.2, 8). "But to the extent that there is something obscure in the subject we are considering, or that we are not entirely certain that we have discovered everything needed to resolve the question . . . , we are free not to consent" (ST.I.2, 8). Indeed, Malebranche holds that we *should* not consent, because we are culpable for our errors, and they are the cause of our misery (ST.III.ii.9, 249). So even though we are passive in our consenting when the understanding presents us with an indubitable connection, Malebranche leaves himself vulnerable to the sceptic's argument – that we should always withhold our consent given that the understanding has previously presented objects as connected that turned out ultimately to be separate from one another.²⁶

Hume says in the *ad hominem* passage that his conceptions of belief and causal reasoning as deriving from "custom" and the "sensitive" part of our nature allow him to escape the force of the sceptical argument. Recall that his treatment of these topics starts with the problem of how we are able to recognize the necessary connections between causally related objects. We do not have direct insight into such connections because it is always possible to conceive of the objects apart from one another. Even if we have always experienced objects of similar types conjointly, we still cannot directly discern that objects of those types will continue to be so conjoined. It is only because our experience leads us to associate together our ideas of the relevant types of objects that we come to believe that an instance of one will always accompany an instance of the other (T.I.iii.6). Belief, then, is not the outcome of a "simple *act* of the thought," but a *passive* event in our minds brought about by how our experiences impact on our associative propensities. Causal reasoning involves *feeling* that objects belong together, rather than actively recognizing their connection (see T.103, I.iii.8.12).

So what happens when we raise the questions of SwR about the authority of reason? Why should I believe the verdict given to me by my associative propensities? On Hume's view, these questions are no longer quite as pressing, for his conception of causal reasoning leaves us in a default position of accepting its authority. A causal inference is an association that has a vivacious idea as its outcome, and the vivacity of an idea *just is* the psychological manifestation of its having authority with us. The objects of such ideas "strike upon us with more force; they are more present to us; the mind has a firmer hold of them, and is more actuated and mov'd by them. It acquiesces in them; and, in a manner, fixes and reposes itself on them" (T.624, App.3). There is no need, then, for some act of assent, separate from the process of reasoning itself, in order for us to accept the verdict of our causal reasoning. It *starts* from a position of authority by its very nature, and so we normally rest contented with what our reason tells us.

We normally *will* rest contented, but *should* we? There are obviously cases where we do feel the need to take a second look at our reasoning in order to

be sure of its verdict. Consider the mathematician who thinks that she has solved an outstanding problem, and so asks herself whether her purported demonstration really is a demonstration. Or the backgammon player who thinks that his position in the game is strong enough to merit doubling the stakes, but who then reassesses the situation just to be sure. These are ordinary enough occurrences, and ones that any philosophical account of reason and belief should have room for.

Hume acknowledges this point in the case of causal reasoning when he says that the authority of any stretch of it is not “entire” (T.182, I.iv.1.5); belief is the outcome of causal reasoning, but the belief is not so strong as to block our reconsidering the matter under investigation. This point applies even to the mathematician, who engages in demonstrative, not causal, reasoning. Since Humean demonstrative reasoning is an exploration of the limits of conceivability, her doubts about her reasoning arise with the recognition that even though she might not be able to conceive of the denial of her purported mathematical theorem, someone else might be able to. Her belief in her demonstration turns out to be based on the causal inference that others will, like her, be similarly unable to conceive of the idea in question.

We can now see the crucial difference between Hume and the Stoics and neo-Stoics discussed earlier. For Hume, the question posed by the sceptic in SwR comes *after* we have formed a belief. We start out *immersed* in our reasoning, carried along by it into a state of belief. Thus, a paradigm piece of causal reasoning for Hume is our instinctively stopping at the edge of a river because of our expectation that we would sink were we to continue (T.103–104, I.iii.8.13). In order to call it into doubt, we have to step back from it by means of a new mental act, a “reflex act of the mind” (T.182, I.iv.1.5) that separates us from our reasoning allowing us to evaluate it. Even then, we will be immersed in our reflections, believing whatever outcome they lead us to, and it would take ongoing “reflex judgements” (T.184, I.iv.1.8) to drive us into the sceptic’s regress. Self-conscious reasoning where we actively evaluate whether we should accept the initially perceived connection is the exception, not the rule.

But the Stoics and neo-Stoics take the opposite approach, modeling belief on the self-conscious reasoning we undertake when trying to be sure to get things right. And so they treat what Hume calls the “reflex act of the mind,” whereby we consider whether a perceived connection should be accepted, not as a separate mental act, but as presupposed in every belief.²⁷ Since these philosophers hold that all error is avoidable (by the Sage, or by the one who uses his will rightly), they also hold that we always have the ability to withhold our cognitive commitments until all the considerations have been properly taken into account. Thus they, unlike Hume, leave themselves open to the sceptic’s attack – taking all considerations into account means taking human fallibility seriously, and this means that they will never exhaust all the relevant considerations for belief, leaving them unable to consent to anything.

3. "Philosophy wou'd Render us Entirely Pyrrhonian . . ."

Two problems with Hume's alternative account of belief still need to be addressed. First, while I noted that Hume wants to allow for the possibility of reflective consideration of our initial instinctive causal verdicts, it is not clear that his account of causal reasoning makes proper room for this. Second, why does Hume say, as his sceptically-minded interpreters stress, that there is no error in the sceptic's argument?

Taking up the first issue first, Hume should and does want to make room for the possibility of our treating causal facts as objective, true independently of what we happen to feel. He wants to be able to say that someone might think that 'eating cheese causes headaches' and be wrong about it even if, given her experience, her ideas of cheese and of headaches are associated. For it might be the case that she only eats cheese when also drinking copious amounts of red wine, and it is the wine that *really* causes the headache. But how can Hume's account of causation allow for this? There is no fact of the matter, a necessary connection between the wine and the headache, waiting to be discovered.

He responds to this problem by introducing certain "general rules"

form'd on the nature of our understanding, and *on our experience of its operations in the judgments we form concerning objects*. By them we learn to distinguish the accidental circumstances from the efficacious causes; and when we find that an effect can be produc'd without the concurrence of any particular circumstance, we conclude that that circumstance makes not a part of the efficacious cause, however frequently conjoin'd with it. (T.149, I.iii.13.11; emphasis added)

That is, our experiences include cases of dashed causal expectations, where kinds of objects, previous instances of which were experienced conjointly, surprised us when we encountered instances of them independent of one another. So we learn that there is a difference between our causal beliefs and the causal facts – namely, those objects that will be conjoined not just when we happen to experience them, but *always* (T.170, I.iii.14.31). In order to increase our confidence in a causal belief we can vary the circumstances in which the cause and effect are found (for example, try eating cheese without drinking wine). Hume lists eight general rules that we should follow to avoid falling prey to causal errors, to increase the probability that our beliefs will track the actual course of nature (T.I.iii.15). He says that these rules constitute "all the LOGIC I think proper to employ in my reasoning" (T.175, I.iii.15.11).

Note, however, that even if all these rules are followed, the causal belief still remains merely probabilistic; it is still conceivable that the two kinds of objects are merely accidentally conjoined, and that there will be cases in the future where instances of them occur independently of one another. Hume's argument that we are unable to grasp intrinsic connections between objects

still stands, and so these rules are not going to give us that. For the corrective “general rules” are not different in kind from the lower-level, association-engendered causal inferences that we would like to correct. Note then how, in the quoted paragraph, he points to our *experience* of the operations of the understanding as standing behind the corrective rules. And we expect the mind to continue as it has in the past – associating ideas together on the basis of the experience of constant conjunctions, mistaking accidental connections for causal ones, and the like – only as a result of our associating together the relevant ideas. The corrective rules, like the unreflective causal judgements they correct, are codifications of our associative tendencies (T.150, I.iii.13,12).

This is why our corrective reflections automatically have authority with us when we are immersed in them, just as our unreflective judgements have authority with us when we are immersed in them. And just as the authority of our unreflective judgements is not “entire,” neither is the authority of our reflective judgements. Hume says:

[T]he sceptics may here have the pleasure of observing a new and signal contradiction in our reason, and of seeing all philosophy ready to be subverted by a principle of human nature [sc. our tendency to generalize on the basis of experience], and again sav'd by a new direction of the very same principle. The following of general rules is a very unphilosophical species of probability, yet 'tis only by following them that we can correct this, and all other unphilosophical probabilities. (T.150, I.iii.13,12)

In SwR, the ‘total’ sceptic tries to exploit this fact about our causal reasoning in order to get his regress going. At each stage, we can legitimately ask whether the reasoning at the previous stage is authentic. Since the corrective rules are not different in kind from our less reflective judgements, it is always possible to ask whether the initial authority they bear should be accepted. So the sceptic is at least in part right. There is “no error” in his “arguments” (T.184, I.iv.1.8). “[A]ll the rules of logic” do “require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence” (T.183, I.iv.1.6), where ‘logic’ refers to the general rules for causal reasoning listed at *Treatise* I.iii.15.

There is still, however, a motivational question that needs to be considered. As we have seen, unlike the Stoics and neo-Stoics who make belief a “simple act of the thought,” we do not, for Hume, *need* to give a reflective verdict on our reasoning in order to form a belief. We have seen that reasoning by its very nature produces a belief, even if its authority is not entire. This means that we need a *reason* to reflect on our reasoning; we are not compelled into the regress simply by our attempt to reach a conclusion. Consider again the mathematician and the backgammon player. The former is motivated to reflect on her reasoning because she worries that her reputation will be harmed if she declares something to be inconceivable that others can conceive without too much trouble, or she is moved simply

by “curiosity” or the “love of truth” (T.II.iii.10) to care about the mathematical realm. The backgammon player might have a competitive personality, or given that he has money on the game he could worry about his potential loss. Moreover, even if someone is moved to check the mathematician’s reasoning, the motivational question reappears after the first round of checking, for it too yields a belief, the authority of which is not entire. Why reflect again? Presumably the number of iterations of checking will be determined by the relative weight of the various motivations at work in the person in question. After a few rounds of checking, the mathematician or backgammon player will rest on her or his verdict, and move on to the next thing in her or his life.

The sceptic, however, claims to be driven by different motives. In presenting the argument of SwR, Hume says that the possible unreliability of our reason “is a doubt, *which immediately occurs to us*, and of which, *if we wou’d closely pursue our reason*, we cannot avoid giving a decision” (T.182, I.iv.1.6; emphasis added). He also says that “we are oblig’d by our reason” (T.182, I.iv.1.6) to try to correct our reasoning reflectively. But what can Hume mean by this? In his official discussion of motivation in Book II of the *Treatise*, he famously declares that reason has no power to obligate us; it “is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions” (T.415, I.iii.3.4). And, as we have seen, normally we are motivated by a desire to discover mathematical truths or to win money at backgammon; reasoning is one component of those activities, and to the extent that our motive dominant at the time requires it, we will accept or reflectively correct our reason as needed. What would it be, then, to “pursue our reason” independently of any other motivation?

The best clue for answering this question is the first clause of Hume’s summary statement of SwR in the “Abstract” to the *Treatise*: “[*P*]hilosophy wou’d render us entirely *Pyrrhonian* . . .” (T.657, Ab.27; first emphasis added; the second clause of this statement is the topic of Section 4.) Hume tells us here that it is a peculiarly philosophical state of mind that drives us into the regress. Unlike the backgammon player or mathematician, who has extrinsic motivations for checking his or her reasoning, the philosopher is motivated by a curiosity about the status of reason itself. Are its verdicts justified? Why? Should we trust the beliefs that reason automatically instills in us? These are legitimate questions, and the philosopher will (try to) apply them to any stretch of reasoning, continuing to (try to) apply them until she comes up with a wholly unimpeachable answer. But Hume thinks that the Pyrrhonist is right in saying that such a justification will not be forthcoming; our reasoning is always fallible. And this means that

[t]his sceptical doubt . . . with respect to reason . . . is a malady, which can never be radically cur’d, but must return upon us every moment, however we may chace it away, and sometimes may seem entirely free from it. ’Tis impossible upon any system to defend . . . our understanding . . .; and we but expose [it] farther when we endeavour to *justify [it] in that manner*. As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from

a profound and intense reflection on [this] subject, it always encreases, the farther we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity to it. (T.218, I.iv.2.57; emphasis added)²⁸

Thus, any attempt to “justify” reason in this philosophical “manner,” any attempt to show that its verdicts are ultimately grounded, serves only to push us into the sceptic’s regress. The philosopher “cannot defend his reason by reason” (T.187, I.iv.2.1) because, insofar as it involves “profound and intense reflection” on the status of reason, he will never rest content with the not-fully-entire authority that our reasoning has by its very nature. He will (try to) continue undertaking those “reflex acts of the mind” (T.182, I.iv.1.5) whereby our reasoning is viewed as merely psychological, in need of some further authentication.

4. “... Were Not Nature Too Strong for It”

Of course, Hume holds that the sceptic cannot maintain the philosophical state of mind whereby we prescind from our natural commitment to the verdicts of our reason: “Nature is too strong” for him. He says in another context, “there appears a great resemblance between the sects of the STOICS and PYRRHONIANS, though perpetual antagonists, and both of them seem founded on this erroneous maxim, That what a man can perform sometimes, and in some dispositions, he can perform always, and in every disposition.”²⁹ That is, the Stoics think that since we *can* reflect on our thought in order to assent to or reject its verdict, this is the posture that the mind is *always* in – standing over its mental processes, deciding whether to accept them. The Pyrrhonists then argue that there never is a reason to do so. Their common mistake is in moving from the true claim that it is *always possible* to reflect on a judgement to the false claim that it is *possible always* so to reflect. But what is the nature of this impossibility? Is it a merely psychological limitation?

This is the view of the naturalist interpreters. They take Hume’s view to be that since we are psychologically unable to go where our reason takes us, reason should be demoted as an autonomous source of belief. Reason is only to be trusted when it “is lively, and mixes itself with some propensity” (T.270, I.iv.7.11).³⁰ I noted the general problems with this interpretation at the start of this chapter – namely, that it saddles Hume with a view that robs reason of its normativity, and that by leaving the sceptical argument intact it seems to share with the sceptical interpreters the conclusion that we are fundamentally irrational, the only difference being that the naturalists want Hume to view this as a good thing. But there is a more specific problem with the naturalist interpretation insofar as it applies to SwR. In particular, it cannot account for how Hume continues the Section after he points to the psychological impossibility of following through with the regress (T.185–7, I.iv.1.10–12).

Hume there wants not only to say that we cannot follow the sceptic's argument, but that we cannot for a very particular reason: It is "destroy'd by [its] subtlety" (T.186, I.iv.1.12). As we doubt the verdicts of our reason, and start to doubt our doubts, "[t]he attention is on the stretch: The posture of the mind is uneasy; and the spirits being diverted from their natural course, are not govern'd in their movements by the same laws, at least not to the same degree, as when they flow in their usual channel" (T.185, I.iv.1.10). The point is that our reflections on our reasonings *interferew* with the proper workings of the mind; they *distort* it; they *alter* its normal economy. The potential for the mind to interfere with itself while it is investigating itself philosophically is a theme throughout the *Treatise*. In the "Introduction," for example, he says that purposeful experimentation is of little help in the 'science of man' because "reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phaenomenon" (T.xix, Intr. 10).³¹ Hume recognizes that sometimes the mind-under-investigation has a different shape from the mind-while-not-being-investigated. And it is the latter he wants to know more about, even though he must investigate it to find out about it.

Hume seems to think that the reflections urged by the sceptic have a similar distorting effect on the mind. Causal reasoning, our propensity to associate ideas in an orderly fashion, starts to break down when the reflective gaze on it starts to iterate. The final paragraph of SwR illustrates this process quite artfully:

Reason first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority. Her enemy, therefore, is oblig'd to take shelter under her protection, and by making use of rational arguments to prove the fallaciousness and imbecility of reason, produces, in a manner, a patent under her hand and seal. This patent has at first an authority, proportion'd to the present and immediate authority of reason, from which it is deriv'd. But as it is suppos'd to be contradictory to reason, it gradually diminishes the force of that governing power, and its own at the same time; till at last they both vanish away into nothing, by a regular and just diminution. (T.186–187, I.iv.1.12)

The sceptic wants to make a rational argument against believing the verdicts of reasoning, but instead he merely causes confusion within himself. This is not Pyrrhonian equipollence, where reason supports equally the two sides of the argument; it is instead the mutual destruction of reason and its investigator. So the regress fails ultimately to grip us because, even though each of its steps is undertaken in the 'pursuit' of reason, reason (temporarily) leaves us when we reflect on it too intensely. Recall that the authority of reason – its "governing power" – was a product of the vivacity of its associatively-produced conclusions. But as we are forced farther and farther back in the regress, we no longer have had the relevant experiences needed to get our associations

off the ground. Thus we are less and less able to reach rational conclusions, and, having less and less vivacity, they are less and less authoritative with us.

So it is not just that we are psychologically unable to stick with the philosophical mindset necessary for the sceptic's argument; it is that the sceptic's use of the philosophical mindset undermines his capacity to continue investigating and also undermines that feature of the mind he is most interested in vindicating – reason's authority. Recall the earlier quotation about the upshot of SwR: "Tis impossible upon any system to defend . . . our understanding . . .; and we but expose [it] farther when we endeavour to justify [it] *in that manner*" (T.218, I.iv.2.57; emphasis added). We learn from the failure of the sceptic's regress to grip us not that the instinctively given authority of reason is spurious or that it is vindicated. Rather we learn that philosophy cannot pass either verdict on reason because the activity of reflecting on reason "in that manner" leaves us without the very thing we were putting on trial.

What we must do is learn to accept our incapacity to give a final verdict on our reason: "Carelessness and in-attention" – a refusal to take the "reflex act" whereby the psychological constitution of our reasoning is made evident to us – "alone can afford us any remedy" (T.218, I.iv.2.57). Hume later calls someone who "studies philosophy in this careless manner" a "true sceptic" in that he is "diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction; and will never refuse any innocent satisfaction, which offers itself, upon account of either of them" (T.273, I.iv.7.14). That is, the true sceptic acquiesces to his reason even while recognizing its fallibility. Philosophy cannot vindicate it, but that does not mean that we should try to live without it (whatever that would mean). Rather we should come to accept that philosophy cannot accomplish everything. As Hume says in describing the aims of his philosophy: "I may contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge, by giving in some particulars a different turn to the speculations of philosophers, and pointing out to them more distinctly those subjects, where alone they can expect assurance and conviction" (T.273, I.iv.7.14). Speculating about the reliability of our reasoning, simply for its own sake rather than in the service of some extrinsic motivation, turns out not to be a fruitful topic for philosophers; we cannot expect "assurance and conviction" on this topic because our speculations interfere with the very object of our speculations.

5. "Mitigated Scepticism or Academical Philosophy"

While in the *Treatise* Hume rejects the 'total' scepticism associated with the argument of SwR in favor of his own "true" version of scepticism, in the first *Enquiry* he rejects "PYRRHONISM or *excessive* scepticism" and endorses "*mitigated* scepticism, or ACADEMICAL philosophy" (EU, 161; XII.iii.24). Given the equation of 'total' scepticism with Pyrrhonism in the "Abstract" of

the *Treatise*, it is usually taken for granted that Hume also means to equate “true” scepticism with “mitigated” or “academical” scepticism. Treating this topic fully would require my examining the differences in style and content between the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, and this would take me too far afield, but it will nonetheless be useful to look briefly at the connections between Academic scepticism and my version of Hume’s “true” scepticism.

We know the views of the Academic sceptics – most importantly Arcesilaus and Carneades – primarily through Cicero’s *Academica*.³² They, like the Pyrrhonists, eschewed doctrine, meeting their opponents’ views with equally strong counterarguments. They too challenged the Stoic doctrine of cognitive impressions by arguing that for any purported such impression, there is another impression, indistinguishable from the first, that did not get at the truth: There was no criterion in the Stoic sense (*Acad.* ii 79–84). But where the Pyrrhonists had primarily ethical motivations for their challenges to doctrine, the Academics were more epistemologically oriented. Thus, Carneades allowed that even though there were no cognitive impressions, some impressions tended to be reliable most of the time or probable (*pithanon*) to some specified degree (*P.H.* i 227–229).

There is an obvious affinity between this view and Hume’s. We have seen that he too argues that we can never be sure that we have succeeded in making a demonstrative argument, but that we can nonetheless rely on our probabilistic judgements despite their fallibility. There is even a passage in Cicero’s *Academica* that adumbrates Hume’s concern about the mind’s reflections interfering with its operations:

We do not know our own bodies, we are ignorant of the positions of their parts and their several functions; and accordingly the doctors themselves, being concerned to know the structure of the body, have cut it open to bring its organs into view, yet nevertheless the empiric school [sc. physicians who subscribe to a sceptical view] assert that this has not increased our knowledge of them, because it is possibly the case that when exposed and uncovered they change their character. (*Acad.* ii 122)

Here the problem is that when anatomists cut open animals in order to investigate them, they have altered their objects of study, perhaps even distorting or destroying the very features they are most interested in examining (for example, what makes an animal live). Hume repeatedly calls his project an “anatomy of mind” (*T.* 326, II.i.12.2),³³ and I think he was aware that the methodological problem about anatomy proper noted by Cicero applies to his own philosophy. Just as some features of an animal cannot be studied by anatomists because the very activity of dissection destroys them, some features of the mind cannot be adequately treated by philosophy because they do not survive their reflective uncovering. Now, just as the anatomist does not conclude from his inability to study certain animal features that those features do not exist – he does not conclude that all animals are dead! – so, also, the philosopher should learn that some of what he is interested in

simply cannot be fully studied. And this does not impugn the inaccessible feature in question; rather it speaks to the limits of what philosophy can do given its methodology. In the case we have been looking at, philosophy's inability to show that a stretch of reasoning can be given an ultimate validation does not mean that reason is invalid. It means that the project of "justifying" the understanding "in that manner" is an impossible project. So much the worse for this project, not for reason. Or this is what the "true" sceptic should think.

But Hume also says some things about Academic scepticism that make it clear that he does not mean to align himself too closely with the historical school. Notably, he suggests that there is an internal relation between Academic and Pyrrhonist scepticism, in that the former emerges when the "undistinguished doubts" of the latter "are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection" (EU, 161; XII.3.24). "Nothing can be more serviceable" in bringing us to embrace mitigated scepticism "than to be once thoroughly convinced of the force of the Pyrrhonian doubt" (EU, 162; XII.3.25). But there is no such link between the two schools.³⁴ For one thing, Academic scepticism predates the Pyrrhonist school. And so the Academics themselves never suggested that an engagement with Pyrrhonism was necessary to recognize the value of their teaching; indeed, Cicero never even mentions his contemporary Aenesidemus, who was at that time in process of reviving Pyrrhonism. If anything, the causal relation between Pyrrhonism and Academicism is the reverse of what Hume suggests. Aenesidemus' motivation was what he saw as a Stoicizing, dogmatic turn in the Academy under the leadership of Antiochus.

Why then would Hume say that feeling the force of Pyrrhonism is "serviceable" in the move to "mitigated" or "true" scepticism? I have interpreted Hume as saying that this position involves recognizing that certain problems are beyond the limits of philosophy. It is hard to establish this negative claim: Why not say instead that these problems are not beyond the limits of philosophy, but beyond the limits of his own philosophical capacity? But the fact that the Pyrrhonist tries to push philosophy as far as it can go in investigating the authority of reason only to destroy reason and his own investigative capacity is evidence that the problem is not specific to Hume. Nonetheless, we each might need to try this experiment for ourselves before we join him in saying that philosophy has nothing to say on this matter.

6. Conclusion

My interpretation of SwR shares some of the features of each of the three other kinds of readings of this Section. Like the sceptically-minded interpreters, I think that Hume wants us to see that there is something right about the sceptical argument of SwR – namely, that reason cannot be given a full justification. We are not able to "radically cure" (T.218, L.iv.2.57) the

sceptical doubt by vindicating reason once and for all. Like the *ad hominem* interpreters, I think that Hume's own conception of reasoning allows him to escape from the 'total' sceptic's condemnation of reason, for the Pyrrhonist fails to acknowledge that his investigation of reason has served only to dislodge it from our minds temporarily. And like the naturalist interpreters, I think that Hume's appealing to our nature is important, not because he needs a normative supplement to (or savior of) reason, but because reasoning is authoritative with us by its very nature.

Finally, I would like to gesture briefly to how my reading of SwR helps us to make sense of its much more complex, sister Section, "Of scepticism with regard to the senses" (T.I.iv.2; hereafter SwS). The two Sections share a common conclusion, the passage I quoted earlier where I omitted the references to the senses: "This sceptical doubt, *both with respect to reason and the senses*, is a malady, which can never be radically cur'd. . . . 'Tis impossible upon any system to defend *either our understanding or senses*; and we but expose them farther when we endeavour to justify them in that manner" (T.218, I.iv.2.57; emphasis added). SwR and SwS also share a common argument. Just as we do not normally reflect on our reasoning, we do not normally reflect on our sense perceptions, instead simply taking them to reveal to us an independent world. But just as reflection shows our reasoning to be merely psychological reasoning, so also reflection shows that we only ever have access to the world as it appears to us. It might seem, then, that we need a justification for thinking that we ever get more than this – authentic reasoning or access to an independent world. But in each case, no such justification is forthcoming. And in each case, the reflections by means of which we investigate this aspect of our minds start to dissolve the object of study. Thus, in SwS, Hume narrates for us his slowly losing faith in his senses as his reflections slowly undermine the associative propensities that constitute our immersion in the world. He starts to think that he is trapped in an inner view of his mind, having access only *to* his perceptions, no longer able to take up the normal non-introspective posture where we have access to things *by means of* our perceptions without thereby being aware of them. The common conclusion to both sceptical Sections holds that in situations like these, philosophy has reached the limits of its investigative power. It cannot show that reason is authentic; it cannot show that our sensory perceptions give us the world. So much the worse for philosophy. Our natural faith in our reason and senses turns out to be immune both to philosophical justification and to philosophical repudiation.³⁵

Notes

1. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition, 273; Norton and Norton edition, Book I, Part iv, Section 7, ¶14. Hereafter I will refer to various subsections of the *Treatise* as 'T' followed by Book, Part, and Section numbers

given in large Roman, small Roman, and Arabic numerals respectively. I will identify quotations with 'T' followed by the Selby-Bigge-Nidditch page number, and the Section and paragraph number as given in Norton and Norton.

2. *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Selby-Bigge and Nidditch edition, 161; Beauchamp edition, Section XII, Part 3, ¶24. Hereafter I will refer to this text parenthetically as 'EU' followed by the Selby-Bigge-Nidditch page number, and by the Section, Part, and paragraph number as given in Beauchamp, using large Roman, Arabic, and Arabic numerals respectively.
3. Though Hume's discussion of causation is often described as sceptical, and he himself uses this label in the first *Enquiry* (EU.IV–V), he does not do so in Part iii of Book I of the *Treatise*. The only occurrences of 'sceptic' (and related words) in the *Treatise* prior to Part iv of Book I are: T.639, L.ii.5.26n12.2; and T.150, L.iii.13.12. The second passage is discussed in Section 3.
4. W. E. Morris (1989); Annette Baier (1991), Chap. 1.
5. Don Garrett (1997), 222–228, and David Owen (1999), 198, argue that since the sceptical argument of SwR reappears in the "Conclusion" to Book I (T.267, L.iv.7.7) – indeed the whole of the "Conclusion" takes the form of a narration of Hume's worries that his philosophical reasoning has not succeeded in reaching the truth – he cannot mean for us to be free of the sceptical worry by the end of SwR. Garrett and Owen each suggest that Hume wants in SwR only to give a psychological mechanism to explain the retention of belief in the face of the sceptic's doubts, and that he does not confront the normative question of whether we should so believe until the "Conclusion."

But I think that the "Conclusion" is too dialectically complex for it to be possible to make a direct inference from the reappearance of SwR's argument there to how Hume wants us to understand that argument at the end of that Section. The "Conclusion" is at least in part the story of Hume's temptation to backslide, to lose his grip on views that he had established earlier. Consider Hume's claim at T.264 that "I feel all my opinions loosen and fall of themselves" (L.iv.7.2), and his description of his disappointment at his failure to discover intrinsic necessary connections (T.266, T.I.iv.7.5), a sentiment that is hard to square with his earlier proud presentation of his treatment of causation in *Treatise* L.iii. So the fact that the argument of SwR reappears in the "Conclusion" might only be a sign of Hume's temporary loss of faith in his earlier conclusions. See W. E. Morris (2000).

A full treatment of the issues raised by the "Conclusion" would take me too far afield from the topic of this chapter, so I will largely ignore it in what follows.

6. Robert Fogelin (1985), Chapter 2; Wayne Waxman (1994), 1–8.
7. Phillip Cummins (1999) calls the problem of squaring Hume's scepticism in Part iv of Book I with what he goes on to do in Books II and II 'the integration problem.'
8. Norman Kemp Smith (1941) is the classic naturalist interpretation; the quotation is from p. 108. See also: Garrett (1997), Chap. 10; Owen (1999), Chap. 9; and Fred Wilson (1997), Chap. 3. Owen's (1999) statement of the naturalist view is especially clear: "Reason's hold on us is limited, and a good thing too. If its influence were unlimited, it would entirely destroy itself. It is only because its

influence is limited by other aspects of our nature that it can have any influence at all. We can be rational only if we are only partly rational. This is not a new theory of reason; it is a new theory of how reason plays only a limited role in belief formation" (195).

9. Stove (1973), 132. I owe thanks to David Owen for drawing this statement to my attention.
10. Fogelin (1985), 14–18.
11. See especially Owen (1999), Chap. 8.
12. Wilson points out that testimony offers a parallel case ((1997), 250), but he overstates the comparison. The crucial point in SwR is that we treat *our own* reasoning as if it were the reasoning of someone else. We can do this, of course, but we can never do this *fully*: in assessing someone else's testimony we rely on our own reason, so in assessing our own reason we must also continue to rely on our own reason. We can never fully get it in view so as to treat it as we do testimony.
13. Owen (1999), 184–188, 195.
14. Sextus Empiricus *Pyrrōneioi Hupotupōseis*, Mutschmann and Mau edition. Hereafter I will refer to this text parenthetically as 'P.H.' followed by the Book and section numbers, in small Roman and Arabic numerals respectively. When quoting extended passages, I will use the translations of Inwood and Gerson (1988).
15. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* II, H. S. Long (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Hereafter I will refer to this text parenthetically as 'D.L.' followed by the Chapter and section numbers, in small Roman and Arabic numerals respectively. When quoting extended passages, I will use the Inwood and Gerson translations.

For discussions of Hume's use of the ancient sceptics, see: Olshewsky (1991); Popkin (1993a); and, especially, Fosl, (1998).

16. As Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (1985) note, this argument has little to do with circumstances, and indeed little to do with sense impressions, applying more generally to any judgement whatsoever (90).
17. "For the demonstration will always need a criterion to be confirmed, and the criterion [will always need] a demonstration to be shown to be true. And a demonstration cannot be sound without a pre-existing true criterion; neither can a criterion be true without a previously confirmed demonstration" (P.H. i 116).
18. Julia Annas (2000) thus concludes that Hume did not understand ancient scepticism correctly.
19. There has been much debate recently over how best to understand ancient Pyrrhonism. The issue turns on whether their target is merely philosophical and quasi-scientific doctrine, or all beliefs whatsoever. A parallel issue concerns the appearances to which the Sceptics remain committed. Are they just everyday, non-technical beliefs? Or are they some non-belief-like, non-judgemental mental state? Michael Frede has staked out the conservative interpretation. See his (1987b) and (1987c). The radical interpretation has been defended by Myles Burnyeat in his (1980), (1982), and (1984). See also Jonathan Barnes (1982). I will try to stay neutral on this debate. [The debate is forcefully joined by Fine in Chapter 8 of this volume (eds.).]
20. Popkin (1979).
21. For example, see the entry "Pyrrho" in Bayle (1991), 194–209.

22. See Frede (1987d).
23. For Descartes, see the Fourth *Meditation*. For Malebranche, see *The Search after Truth*, Book I, Chap. 2. Hereafter I will refer to various subsections of the *Search* as 'ST' followed by Book, Part (if there is one), Chapter, and Lennon-Olscamp page numbers given in large Roman, small Roman, Arabic, and Arabic numerals respectively.
 In a 1737 letter (to Michael Ramsay), written shortly after he had left La Flèche having completed much of the *Treatise*, Hume makes his familiarity with these philosophers clear: "I shall submit all my Performances to your Examination, & to make you enter into them more easily, I desire of you, if you have Leisure, to read once over La Recherche de la Verité of Pere Malebranche, the Principles of Human Knowledge by Dr Berkeley, some of the more metaphysical articles of Bailes Dictionary, such as those [...] of] Zeno, & Spinoza. Des-Cartes Meditations would also be useful but don't know if you will find it easily among your Acquaintances[.] These Books will make you easily comprehend the metaphysical Parts of my Reasoning ..." (included in R. Popkin (1993b), 291; the interpolations are Popkin's).
24. Even those, like Locke, who do not accept the basic tenets of Cartesian rationalism, still model the mind in such a way that we stand over our ideas, acquiring knowledge when we perceive their agreement or disagreement, forming opinions when we judge them to agree or disagree for the most part. It is unclear whether this leaves Locke susceptible to the argument of SwR. On the one hand, he says we are wholly passive in perceiving the agreement or disagreement in the case of ideas; we cannot have the ideas without perceiving their (dis-)agreement (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV.xx.16). On the other hand, he says that in judgements of probability, we can continue to search out for evidence that might influence our view. Moreover, "Manifest Probabilities may be evaded, and the Assent withheld, upon this Suggestion, That *I know not yet all that may be said on the contrary side*. And therefore though I be beaten, 'tis not necessary I should yield, not knowing what Forces there are in reserve behind" (*Essay*, IV.xx.14). This suggests that the sceptic would have cognitive room to raise the doubts that get the regress going. See Owen (1999), 54–61.
25. Consider Descartes' claim about his assent to the *cogito*: "[A] great light in the intellect was followed by a great inclination in the will" (CSM II, 41; AT VII 47).
26. Malebranche leaves himself especially open to the sceptical argument of SwR when he says that we should always "heed the weakness and limitation of [our] own minds" (ST.III.ii.9, 249).
27. Locke is an interesting case here. He holds that such "reflex" acts are built into the very structure of the mind. In perceiving an idea, we perceive that we are perceiving (*Essay*, II.xxvii.9), and it is because of this self-consciousness that we can be held responsible for our deeds – and perhaps also for our thoughts – in that we could have delayed acting until all the relevant factors were properly considered (*Essay*, II.xxi.47). Consider also Samuel Clarke's definition of consciousness: "*Consciousness*, in the most strict and exact Sense of the Word, signifies ... the *Reflex Act by which I know that I think, and that my Thoughts and Actions are my own and not Another's*" ("A Letter to Mr. Dodwell" in *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, vol. 3, 784).

28. This passage comes from the final paragraph of "Of scepticism with regard to the senses" (T.I.iv.2), and it originally applied to "[t]his sceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses" (T.218, I.iv.2.57). The ellipses in the quotation come from my excising its references to scepticism about the senses. See Section 6.
29. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Kemp Smith edition, 133.
30. See Garrett (1997), Chap. 10, for a naturalist interpretation that uses this passage as its key text. Where Garrett takes it to enunciate Hume's view about when we should accept the verdicts of *reason*, I take it to be Hume's view about when we should *philosophize*. It is not necessary to philosophize, and only those who have a taste for it should pursue it, although the natural human tendency to succumb to superstition (T.271, I.iv.7.13) means that sometimes we need to do philosophy even when we do not feel like it.
31. In the "Conclusion" to Book I, the philosophical interference with the mind becomes so intense that Hume describes himself as suffering what appears to be a nervous breakdown: "The *intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? and on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environ'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv'd of the use of every member and faculty" (T.268–9, I.iv.7.8).
32. Hereafter I will refer to the *Academica* parenthetically as 'Acad' followed by the Book and section numbers in small Roman and Arabic numerals respectively. When quoting, I will use the translations by Rackham.
 For a general treatment of the influence of the Academics on the early moderns see J. R. M. Neto (1997).
33. See also: T.263, I.iv.6.23; 301, II.i.8.7; 620–21, III.iii.6.6; 646, Ab.2.
34. Annas (2000).
35. I owe thanks to David Owen, Brad Inwood, and Jon Miller for their helpful criticisms of various versions of this chapter. I would also like to thank Tobin Woodruff, who commented on my presentation at the Toronto conference; he, along with the audience on that occasion, made me rethink – and, I hope, strengthen – my argument.

Stoic Naturalism in Butler

Terence Irwin

1. Naturalism and the Ancient Moralists

Joseph Butler (1692–1752) was not a prolific writer. His major work in moral philosophy, the *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, is always terse and often cryptic.¹ He has been described as “the most sagacious, if not the most consistent or systematic, of the British Moralists.”² But one systematic element in his moral outlook is his appeal to nature, and this element reasonably invites a comparison with Stoicism.³

Butler’s sermons are intended “to explain what is meant by the nature of man, when it is said that virtue consists in following, and vice in deviating from it, and by explaining to show that the assertion is true” (P 13). He says that this claim about nature is the view of the ancient moralists, but not the unanimous view of modern moralists. Some people simply reject it, while others regard it as trivial and useless, even if it is true (P 13).

He attributes the naturalist formula to “the ancient moralists” indiscriminately.

That the ancient moralists had some inward feeling or other, which they chose to express in this manner, that man is born to virtue, that it consists following nature, and that vice is more contrary to this nature than tortures or death, their works in our hands are instances. (P 13)

In the comparative expression “more contrary to this nature,” Butler suggests that torture and death are to some degree contrary to nature. A later remark on the ancient moralists develops this suggestion:

Thus, when it is said by ancient writers that tortures and death are not so contrary to human nature as injustice – by this, to be sure, is not meant that the aversion to the former in mankind is less strong and prevalent than their aversion to the latter, but that the former is only contrary to our nature considered in a partial view, and which takes in only the lowest part of it, that which we have in

common with the brutes; whereas the latter is contrary to our nature considered in a higher sense, as a system and constitution contrary to the whole economy of man. (iii 2)

He therefore attributes to the ancients a doctrine of degrees of naturalness, and hence a graded conception of nature, according to which torture and death are indeed contrary to nature, but less contrary to nature than vice is.

The most obvious source for this conception of nature and virtue is Stoicism. Butler's two remarks about the ancients clearly recall a passage in Cicero:

For a human being, therefore, to take something from another, and to increase his advantage by the disadvantage of another human being, is more contrary to nature than is death or poverty or pain or the other things that can happen to our body or to external things. (Cicero, *De Officiis* iii 21)⁴

Further, if someone wrongs another to gain some advantage for himself, either he supposes that he is not acting against nature, or he estimates that death, poverty, pain, or even the loss of children, kin, or friends, is more to be avoided than an act of injustice against anyone. If he supposes he is not acting against nature by wronging human beings, how is one to argue with him, given that he altogether takes away humanity (*hominem*) from a human being? But if he estimates that, while such a course is indeed to be avoided, the other things – death, poverty, pain – are much worse, he is mistaken in estimating that any defect (*vitium*) belonging to the body or to fortune is more serious than vices (*vitia*) of the soul. (Cic. *Off.* iii 26)

Butler may well have precisely these passages in mind when he attributes a graded conception of nature to the ancient moralists.

A further recollection of Stoicism appears in the connexion he sees between naturalism and a doctrine of natural law. In claiming that human beings are by nature a law to themselves, Butler draws on the tradition derived from St Paul.

The apostle asserts that the Gentiles *do by NATURE the things contained in the law*.⁵ . . . He intends to express, more than that by which they *did not*, that by which they *did* the works of the law; namely, *by nature*. . . [T]here is a superior principle of reflexion or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his external actions; which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust . . . It is by this faculty, natural to man, that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself. . . . This prerogative, this *natural supremacy*, of the faculty which surveys, approves or disapproves the several affections of our mind and actions of our lives, being that by which men are a law to themselves, their conformity or disobedience to which law of our nature renders their actions, in the highest and most proper sense, natural or unnatural. . . . (ii 8–9)

Butler takes St Paul to claim both that rational agents are a law to themselves and that conscience is the means of recognizing the content of the law.

In connecting natural law with nature and reason, Butler recalls the same passage in *De Officiis* that suggests the graded conception of nature.

And this follows even more from the reason of nature, which is divine and human law. If anyone is willing to obey it (and all will obey it who want to live in accord with nature), he will never act so as to seek what belongs to another and to take for himself what he has taken from another. (Cic. *Off.* iii 23)

Cicero assumes, as Butler does, that the law of nature is not simply about rational agents, but is also available to rational agents. Butler claims that nature is the source of self-legislation (that is, being a law to oneself), because it contains a rational principle appealing to rational authority distinct from psychological strength. He claims further that the rational and authoritative principles tell us what is appropriate for our nature. The law that we give ourselves also tells us what is naturally suitable for us, and so we have an obligation to obey it because it is “the law of our nature” (iii 5).

Butler does not believe that the traditional appeal to nature really needs elaborate explanation.⁶ But he thinks clarification is useful because some critics of the naturalist formula mistake its conception of nature. Given their mistake, it is not surprising that they reject the formula or dismiss it as empty.⁷ If the naturalist formula could be understood only as these critics understood it, their criticisms would be justified. To show why they are wrong, we need the right account of claims about human nature.

Since Butler alludes to Stoic naturalism and seeks to defend views that are present in Stoic sources, we can usefully ask some questions about his treatment of the naturalist formula: (1) Is he right to claim that he defends the view of the ancient moralists? (2) Is his defense the same as theirs, or is it better or worse than theirs? (3) How successful is his defense or their defense?

2. Stoic Naturalism

To know what to look for in Butler, we ought to see why the Stoics believe their naturalist claim about virtue. In *De Officiis* iii, the source of Butler’s remarks on the ancient moralists, Cicero begins his discussion of virtue by recalling the Stoic doctrine that the highest good is living in accord with nature:

When the Stoics say that the highest good is living in accord with nature, this, in my view, has the sense: always to conform to virtue, and to select the other things that are in accord with nature, if they do not conflict with virtue. (Cic. *Off.* iii 12)⁸

Since the Stoics claim that virtue is identical to happiness, they claim, as Cicero and Butler say, that virtue consists in living in accordance with nature.

They are therefore committed to these claims:

1. Happiness is following nature.
2. Happiness is virtue.
3. Virtue is following nature.

But how are these claims connected? What do the Stoics take to be the connexions between the naturalist theses about happiness and about virtue?

The presentations of Stoic ethics suggest that the identification of happiness with following nature is basic, or at least is independent of the naturalist claim about virtue. Nothing in our sources suggests that the Stoics argue for (1) by appeal to (2) and (3). Nor do the Stoics argue for (2) independently of (3); they do not try to prove the identity of virtue and happiness without appeal to the natural character of virtue. They treat (1) and (3) as premises and (2) as the conclusion. The natural character of virtue justifies the identification of virtue with happiness.

When they claim that the human good is living in accordance with nature, they refer (among other things) to the distinctive nature of human beings (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum*, vii 89).⁹ The things that accord with this distinctive nature include health, safety, wealth, and the other things that Aristotle calls “external goods” and the Stoics call “preferred indifferents”; but they also include the exercise of human nature in rational efforts to achieve these objects. This exercise of one’s nature is virtue (D.L. vii 88).

In support of the claim about nature and happiness, Stoics appeal to the natural tendencies of living organisms to preserve themselves and their natural constitution and capacities (D.L. vii 85). The character of self-preservation differs according to the nature of the organism. Plants preserve themselves without impulse or sense-perception; animals preserve themselves by reliance on impulse; rational animals live by reason, which is an “artificer of impulse” (86). Hence the end consists in living in accord with reason, and thereby in accord with nature (87).

Different Stoics describe the end in different ways (87–8), trying to identify the specific form of rationally-guided life that accords with the nature of human beings as rational (Cf. Stobaeus, *Ecl.* ii 75.11–76.15.) Since human nature does not consist of reason alone, we would not live in accord with nature simply by engaging in reasoning. The introduction of reason as “artificer of impulse” would be misleading if reason did not organize and direct the other capacities of human beings in some pattern that fulfills them. The Stoic Diogenes may intend to emphasize this fact about practical reason in saying that the end consists in “good reasoning in the selection of things in accord with nature” (D.L. vii 88).

One might suppose that the end consists in the possession of things in accord with nature, no matter how we have got them, and that reason is simply the most efficient means of getting them. But Stoic descriptions of

the end do not take reason to have only an instrumental role in securing a life in accord with nature. Since a human being is essentially rational, the exercise of reason must itself be a part of the life in accord with nature. Hence Diogenes' formula makes the end consist in good reasoning, not simply in the possession or use of the products of good reasoning.

This is the feature of life in accord with nature that the Stoics refer to in arguing that the virtues are in accord with nature. For they are the different ways in which one reasons well about selecting things in accord with nature, so that virtue as a whole is "a state of mind agreeing with the way (*modus*) of nature and with reason" (Cicero, *De Inventione* ii 159). If the Stoics are right, the virtues they recognize must have two characteristics: (1) They deserve to be called bravery, justice, and so on because they require the sorts of actions and states of character that are normally taken to belong to these virtues. (2) Such actions and states of character are appropriate for the fulfillment of the capacities of human nature.

It is not a trivial matter to be convinced on these two points, for our initial conception of human capacities and their fulfillment is independent (at least in part) of our initial conception of virtue and virtuous action. By showing that these two initial conceptions agree, or can reasonably be adjusted so as to agree, the Stoics connect virtue with nature, and thereby connect virtue with happiness. The correct grasp of human happiness shows that it consists in living in accord with nature, which requires living in accordance with virtue in preference to any other aim. The virtuous person chooses virtuous actions for their own sake, because they exercise practical reason. This non-instrumental value makes them "fine" or "right" (*kalon, honestum*).¹⁰

If this is the connexion between different Stoic views, the Stoics might be right about virtue and nature, but wrong about happiness and nature. In that case, we would believe that virtue is to be valued for its own sake, insofar as it is in accord with nature, but we would deny that happiness is living in accord with nature; hence we would reject the Stoic identification of happiness with virtue.

The Stoics, however, reject this position. In their view, we have the virtues only if we attribute this non-instrumental value to them and see the connexion between rightness, nature, and happiness. If we take the final good to be unconnected with virtue, and so measure it by our own advantage, and not by rightness, we cannot consistently cultivate friendship, justice, generosity, or bravery.

But some schools distort every duty (*officium*) by the ends of goods and evils that they present. For anyone who introduces the supreme good in such a way that it has no connexion with virtue, and measures it by his own advantages, and not by the right (*honestum*), this person, if he is consistent with himself and is not sometimes overcome by goodness of nature, could not cultivate either friendship or justice or generosity; and certainly he cannot possibly be brave if he judges pain the highest evil, or temperate if he takes pleasure to be the highest good. (Cic. *Off.* i 5)

Cicero has Epicureans especially in mind. He distinguishes questions about their personal character from questions about the implications of their theory (*Fin.* ii 80). Since their conception of the final good leaves out rightness, it demotes the virtues to a purely instrumental status that conflicts with the outlook of the virtuous person (*Fin.* ii 35).

This Stoic claim about the connexion between virtue and happiness asserts that we have reason to value virtue and virtuous action as non-instrumentally good if and only if we regard them as a part of happiness. Stoics do not suggest that the requirements of moral virtue and of rightness require agents to act against their happiness or to act without regard to their happiness. Indeed, Cicero assumes that a proper regard for the virtues must count them as parts of our happiness.

One might defend Cicero's assumption by this argument:

1. We have reason to value virtue and virtuous action appropriately if and only if we have reason to regard them as non-instrumentally good.
2. We have reason to value virtue and virtuous action as non-instrumentally good if and only if we regard them as a part of happiness.
3. Therefore we have reason to value them appropriately if and only if we regard them as a part of happiness.

If Cicero accepts the second premise, he implicitly rejects these other possible views about virtue and happiness:

- a. We value virtue and rightness appropriately only if we do not count them as part of our happiness.
- b. We have sufficient reason to pursue them above all other goods or advantages even if they conflict with our happiness or they do not affect it either way.

The first of these claims is a rigorist objection, taking Stoicism to exclude the right attitude to virtue. The second claim simply says that the right attitude to virtue does not require the Stoic attitude; contrary to Cicero, what we think about virtue and happiness is irrelevant to our reasons for pursuing virtue.

Now that we have seen how the Stoics understand their naturalist claim about virtue, and how they connect it with their naturalism about happiness, we can compare Butler's position with theirs.

3. Nature as a System

Since Butler's exposition of the naturalist thesis is fuller than anything in a surviving Stoic source, it may clarify the Stoic thesis. Since he believes that attacks on the naturalist position rest on misunderstanding, his defense rests on his own interpretation and explanation of the naturalist formula.

Butler tries to distinguish the Stoic conception of nature from conceptions that seem to make the Stoic formula totally implausible. He begins with two familiar senses of "natural." We might take it to mean (i) in accordance with some natural impulse or other, or (ii) in accordance with one's strongest natural impulse (ii 5–6). To show how these two senses of "natural" are not the only ones, he introduces a connexion between nature and system that defines a third sense.

When we study some system or whole, our understanding of it depends on our understanding of the whole, and hence of the point of each part in it. We do not understand a watch unless we grasp "its conduciveness to this one or more ends," which are the ends of the system as a whole (P 14). This view of the watch clarifies some claims about its nature: (1) The nature of a watch is to tell the time. (2) It is natural for watches to run fast or slow, break down etc. The first statement is a claim about the system as a whole; the different bits and pieces constitute some organized whole in which they have a particular part to play. The watch is going against its nature when it is (as we say) "out of order."

This claim about the watch explains Butler's claim about human nature. The properties that belong to x 's nature are those that belong to x as a whole system, and not simply to its parts; doing F is natural for x if F is required by x as a whole rather than simply a part or aspect of x .¹¹ We grasp the system in human nature not by looking at the several passions in themselves, but by considering their relations.

The third sense of "natural" implies that something has a nature that is distinct from the collection of its natural traits and tendencies. We may recognize natural traits as those that do not depend crucially on environment, experience, or learning, and we may say that the collection of these natural traits add up to the subject's nature. But they do not add up to the sort of nature that Butler has in mind, for they need not add up to a system.

This appeal to a system may be clear enough when we consider an artifact with a known design, for the designer of the watch sets the end for which the system is made, and which makes it the system it is. To extend this paradigm directly to human beings, we have to assume that they are also artifacts designed for some purpose. Though Butler believes that human beings are designed by God (ii 1), he does not want his ethical argument to rely directly on this theological premise, and so he ought to be able to explain his claims about nature and system without appeal to design. Though he acknowledges God's role as creator and designer, he does not appeal to revelation to discover what God has designed us for; he assumes that we can discover our nature by looking at a human being to see how different elements constitute a single system.¹²

Some intuitive views seem to support Butler. If a doctor says "You need an operation," and explains that we need it in order to remove a cancerous growth, we do not disagree on the ground that the cancerous growth itself

does not need to be removed and that it would be better for the growth to be allowed to keep growing instead of being killed. Or if I say "I need to exercise more," the part of me that enjoys being lazy does not need the exercise, but I may nonetheless need it. In such cases, we follow Butler in distinguishing the requirements of the system as a whole from the requirements of particular parts of it. We think of selves as having aims and interests of their own, distinct from a mere collection of the motives, desires, and impulses that constitute us.

But even if we tend to speak in Butler's way, we may suspect we are speaking loosely. To dispel this suspicion, we need to consider what we imply in speaking of the requirements of a system as a whole. If we treat something as a system rather than simply a collection, we imply that its different traits achieve results that are (a) consistent, (b) harmonious, and (c) mutually co-operative. Consistency requires that different traits do not regularly tend to conflict and to undermine one another. Harmony requires them to co-exist in such a way that their results tend to be mutually supportive. Co-operation requires more active and deliberate steps to achieve harmony, so that one trait tends not only to support or facilitate another, but actually seeks to strengthen and to help it.

This is a rough and stipulative description of the difference between a system and a collection of traits, but it suggests what Butler has in mind, and what we mean by the intuitive judgments that seem to support him. In believing that I need an operation, even though the part of me that will be removed does not need it, I assume that my various aims and ends will be supported better by the absence of my tonsils or appendix. Butler's suggestion that what I need is determined by some system of aims and activities is easy to accept in such cases. If our aims did not form some system, it would be more difficult than it is to reach reasonable judgments about what we need.

Having explained naturalness by reference to the requirements of a system, Butler asks what natural action is like. His answer introduces superior principles. Once we grasp the character of a superior principle, we can clarify the generic conception of acting naturally by affirming that it is natural to follow the superior rather than the inferior principle.

4. Superiority

Butler explains his conception of superiority by appeal to the difference between mere power or strength and authority (ii 14). Authority belongs to the lawful government, even if it happens that a tyrant or brigand has greater power. The lawful authority has the right to command and we have reason to obey it, even if we do not or cannot always obey it.

The contrast between power and authority clarifies the normative character of superior principles; this is their claim to motivate us by something other than their psychological strength. If there were no superior principles,

we would have to suppose “that there was no distinction to be made between one inward principle and another but only that of strength” (ii 16). But we clearly distinguish authority from strength.

We can draw Butler’s distinction if we consider an agent deliberating, and asking “Why should I do this?” Sometimes we have a reason simply in virtue of the fact that we want to do *x* more than we want to do *y*; the relevant principle is strength. Sometimes, however, our reason for doing *x* rather than *y* rests on our belief that *y* is better than *x*, not simply on our feeling like doing *y* rather than *x*.

We might decide on the basis of strength when we choose between red wine and white wine, or we decide to go to one film rather than another; in that case, we might simply ask, “Which do I prefer?” In other cases, however, we do not deliberate by simply registering our preferences; we deliberate by considering the merits of different courses of action. If I am angry at someone for having got a job I wanted, my strongest desire at first may be to express my anger, but I may also recognize that I have no good reason to take it out on my rival. I do not simply register the comparative strength of my desires; I modify their strength by what Butler calls “reflexion” on the merits of different courses of action.¹³

To explain why we must recognize superior principles, Butler argues that they are necessary for the recognition of something that we cannot rationally refuse to recognize. We could not have reason to give up the belief that some things deserve approval more than others, for it would be absurd to believe that any two actions that a human being can do (and hence accord with nature in either of the first two senses) equally deserve approval. He claims that we face this absurd result if we do not recognize a claim to superiority and authority distinct from the strength of a desire.

If we recognize no superior principles, we lose any basis for drawing distinctions between the worst and the best actions.

If there be no difference between inward principles but only that of strength, we can make no distinction between these two actions, considered as the actions of such a creature; but in our coolest hours must approve or disapprove them equally; than which nothing can be reduced to a greater absurdity. (ii 17)

If strength is the only basis for approval, I must approve any action that anyone does; but clearly I do not. If we do not distinguish authority from strength, we cannot explain why we should think it is better to do *x* rather than *y*, or that there is reason to do *x* rather than *y*, in cases where *x* and *y* are equally natural in the first two senses. Butler exposes the absurdity of abandoning normative judgments altogether.

If we do not recognize superior principles guiding action, we have no reason to recognize them guiding belief; we must abandon the formation of beliefs on the basis of better reasons. In that case, we have to explain, as the Greek Sceptics try to explain, how we can live simply on the basis of

appearances. The Stoics argue that the Sceptical position leads to “inaction” (*apraxia*).¹⁴ The sources do not always make it clear what the Stoics think the Sceptic is incapable of by being inactive. But the most plausible Stoic argument points out that though the Sceptic is capable of goal-directed movement, as a non-rational animal is, Scepticism removes the possibility of acting on reasons. That is why Scepticism makes a human life impossible, so that Sceptics are mistaken in claiming to follow everyday life. The Stoics are urging the absurdity, as Butler puts it, of equal approval and disapproval of any two actions.

One passage in Sextus considers this Stoic use of Butler’s argument about absurdity. The dogmatists argue that if a tyrant threatens the Sceptic with a choice between doing something evil or being killed, then either the Sceptic will refuse to do the evil action or he will do as he is told to avoid torture. In either case, he will show that he thinks one course of action better than another, and will assent on the basis of that conviction (Sextus, *Adversus Mathematicos* xi 164). Sextus suggests that this is a misinterpretation of the Sceptic’s response:

When he is being compelled by a tyrant to do something forbidden, it may happen that because of a preconception in accordance with ancestral laws and with customs he will choose the one and avoid the other; and he will certainly bear the discomfort more easily in comparison with the dogmatist, because he holds no belief in addition to this (discomfort), as the dogmatist does. (*M* ix 166)

The Sceptic does not make up his mind by considering the goodness or badness of what he does; he simply follows whichever appearance strikes him more strongly.

The Stoics need not deny that this sort of response is logically possible. They might reasonably urge that it is none the less “absurd,” as Butler puts it, because it deprives the Sceptic of the resources that everyone uses to decide such cases. The Sceptic will have to go in one direction or the other without the benefit of the evaluative comparison that we normally rely on. If we think it is part of a human life to be capable of acting on evaluative comparisons that may alter the strength of our desires, we are entitled to conclude that the Sceptic deprives us of a human life. This dispute between Stoics and Sceptics supports Butler’s claim that we cannot abandon the distinction between power and authority in our choices.

5. How Many Principles Are Superior?

So far, we have described the character of a superior principle, and the necessity of acknowledging superior principles, without saying which principles are superior, or why it is natural to act in accordance with any superior principles or with the specific ones that Butler recognizes.

It is not always clear how many superior principles Butler recognizes. In the Preface and the earlier sermons, he tends to mention "reflexion" or "conscience" or both together as the superior principle. An irrational passion conflicts with "reflexion and conscience" (P 17, ii 3). Conscience is "the principle in man by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions" (i 8; cf. P 9 on approbation). This attitude, assessing different passions by considering weight of reasons rather than strength of desire, matches Butler's characterization of a superior principle in general. Similarly, he speaks of the "superior principle of reflexion or conscience," which has natural authority as distinct from strength (ii 8). He claims to have established the supremacy of "the one superior principle of reflexion or conscience" (iii 2).

In these passages, one might suppose that Butler identifies guidance by conscience with guidance by any superior principle. In that case, he attaches a very broad sense to "conscience." This, however, is not his predominant view. When he states his position in more detail, he recognizes self-love as a superior principle distinct from conscience.¹⁵ When he identifies conscience with the supreme principle, he recognizes distinct and independent superior principles; each is superior in its own right, and not because of its relation to any other superior principle. If Butler did not believe this, his claim that conscience is supreme, and not just superior, would be trivial, for there would be no other superior principle over which it could be supreme.

To explain how acting on this faculty is natural, Butler claims that someone acting against reasonable self-love acts against his nature in acting against this superior principle.

... it is manifest that self-love is in human nature a superior principle to passion. This may be contradicted without violating that nature; but the former cannot. So that, if we will act conformably to the economy of man's nature, reasonable self-love must govern. Thus, without particular consideration of conscience, we may have a clear conception of the *superior nature* of one principle to another; and see that there really is this natural superiority, quite distinct from degrees of strength and prevalency. (ii 11)

Here he attributes to self-love the sort of authority that he also attributes to conscience.¹⁶

Butler's oscillations between claims about generic conscience and claims about specific conscience are not surprising, for he is both explaining the concept of a superior principle and defending his own view of which principles are superior. For the first purpose, it is reasonable to speak of "reflexion" without discrimination, but for the second purpose, it is necessary to distinguish different superior principles. We can set out Butler's argument most clearly if we examine his different proposed superior principles one at a time, explaining why he regards them as superior, and why he believes that we act naturally in following each of them.

6. The Superiority of Self-Love

To show that self-love is a superior principle, Butler distinguishes it from the particular passions that are focussed on specific external objects. A passion pursues its objects “without distinction of the means by which they are to be obtained” (ii 13). This may lead to a conflict between two appetites in cases where the objects of one “cannot be obtained without manifest injury to others” (ii 13). Reflexion decides in favor of one course of action rather than the other, by considering which is better.

This reflexion expresses rational self-love insofar as it expresses our conception of ourselves as more than a collection of episodes of desire. The fact that satisfaction of one desire conflicts with satisfaction of another would be completely indifferent to us if we did not care about the joint product of satisfying the two desires. Since we are temporally extended selves, and these selves are partly constituted by our plans for ourselves, we are concerned about the different aspects of ourselves in the present, and about their development in the future. Self-love differs from particular passions insofar as it has a particular concern with a self that consists of more than one affection and exists at more than one time. To express this self, I have to recognize reasons to make decisions that conflict with one or another present passion, and I have to recognize the possibility of conflict between the weight of reasons and the strength of particular impulses.

Butler assumes that if we were guided exclusively by strength, we would satisfy particular passions without actually pursuing our own interests. None of the particular passions shows us what our whole self needs. But since we think of ourselves as whole selves, not just as collections, we must evaluate one passion against another, to see whether the effect of satisfying one will be destructive to ourselves as a whole. Since we cannot secure our interests as extended selves if we simply rely on the comparative strength of desires that we register at a particular time, we must consider not only what we happen to care about most now, but what our future interest requires. If we recognize ourselves as something more than a collection, and hence as having concerns that go beyond the satisfaction of this particular desire now, we must recognize the relevance of superior principles that rely on authority rather than mere strength.

7. Self-Love as a Source of Natural Action

The systematic and holistic character of rational self-love is clear throughout Butler’s discussion. He believes that when the reflexion of rational self-love conflicts with our particular passions, it is obvious that reflexion should be obeyed, and that this is obvious “from the economy and constitution of human nature,” irrespective of the comparative strength of the relevant

desires. His argument is this:

1. The superior principle is the one that relies on the weight of reasons rather than the strength of desire.
2. Self-love is a superior principle, requiring us to consider ourselves as whole selves rather than mere collections of impulses.
3. To act according to the reasons applying to us as whole selves is in accord with our nature.
4. Hence it is in accord with our nature ("natural") to follow self-love.

Butler does not assert that reasonable self-love explicitly considers our nature. My judgments about what is in my longer-term interest are not (or need not be) *de dicto* judgments about what is natural. But they are *de re* judgments about what is natural, because the outlook of self-love takes account of those features of me that constitute my nature.

The relevant sense of "nature" is fixed by the third step of the argument. Butler argues that it is reasonable to identify our nature with the essential characteristics of our selves, taking our selves to be extended, including more than one desire, and embodying some concern for a rational ordering of particular desires. According to this conception of human nature, being a rational agent of the sort who attends to rational self-love is part of the nature of a human being. As Butler argues, if we refused to say this, we would be neglecting the systematic element in human nature.

Thus the body is a system or *constitution*; so is a tree; so is every machine. Consider all the several parts of a tree without the natural respects they have to each other, and you have not at all the idea of a tree; but add these respects, and this gives you the idea. The body may be impaired by sickness, a tree may decay, a machine may be out of order, and yet the system and constitution of them not totally dissolved. There is plainly somewhat which answers to all this in the moral constitution of man. (iii 2n)¹⁷

If we were to neglect the role of superior principles, we would be thinking of a human being as a mere collection of episodes of desire and satisfaction; whatever we described in such terms would not be human agency or human nature as we normally conceive it.

This conception of nature and the natural explains why acting on self-love is natural. Butler asks what makes a rash and self-destructive action unnatural:

Is it that he went against the principle of reasonable and cool self-love, considered merely as a part of his nature? No: for if he had acted the contrary way, he would equally have gone against a principle of his nature, namely, passion or appetite. But to deny a present appetite, from foresight that the gratification of it would end in immediate ruin or extreme misery, is by no means an unnatural action; whereas to contradict or go against cool self-love for the sake of such gratification, is so in the instance before us. (ii 11)

Self-love is not simply a passion on the level of other passions and desires that might strike us. Its outlook results from reflexion on the merits of satisfying one or another particular passion, and so it expresses a superior principle. Since self-love takes account of our interests as agents with a future to take care of, it is needed to safeguard the interests of our nature as a whole. And so our nature as a whole requires us to follow rational self-love.

Two points emerge, therefore, from consideration of rational self-love: (1) The attitude of rational self-love shows us that we regard rational agents as having a nature in Butler's third sense, because they are composed of a system of desires and aims extending across time, and are not merely a collection. (2) This same attitude shows us that it is natural to act on this superior principle.

Though we derive both these points from considering the fact that self-love takes a holistic point of view on the agent, they are distinct points. If we could recognize that we care about ourselves as whole systems, but we could not think of what to do to promote our interests as whole systems, we would learn that we have a nature without learning what sort of principle we must follow in order to act naturally. If we could recognize that self-love aims at our interest as whole systems, but we supposed that it is deluded in assuming that we are whole systems, then we would also have failed to find a natural course of action. We must agree that we learn both things about self-love, in order to accept Butler's argument to show that it is natural to act on self-love.

In discussing superior principles in general, and in arguing that action on the superior principle of self-love is natural, Butler has combined two ways in which it may be natural to act on a superior principle. (1) The character of reasonable self-love shows that a superior principle may have a regulative function in arranging for the harmonious and mutually co-operative ends that make a person a system with a nature rather than a collection of impulses. Without reasonable self-love to take account of my present and future, expressed and unexpressed, desires, I will not do what the system requires. (2) Since the nature of a human being essentially includes guidance by reason, it must include guidance by superior principles; if we tried to conceive the system of human nature as a series of activities that excluded practically-rational activity, we would have failed to grasp human nature.

These two roles for self-love correspond to the two roles that the Stoics see for reason. It has the first role, insofar as it is the "artificer of impulse"; its task is to arrange and to regulate impulses that are natural (in Butler's first two senses) so that they constitute a system that is natural (in Butler's third sense). It has the second role, insofar as we recognize that human nature is essentially rational nature, and that therefore rational guidance is to be valued for its own sake.

8. The Stoics on Nature and Self-Love

For these reasons, Butler's discussion of natural action and of the natural character of self-love is an accurate and helpful clarification of the ancient moralists. We have no evidence to suggest that he has specific texts in mind, apart from the passage in *De Officiis* iii; but the fact that we can find specific texts to support his conception of superior principles and of self-love shows that he has grasped the sense of Stoic claims about nature. The political analogy he uses to distinguish power from authority recalls Plato's division between rational and non-rational parts of the soul.¹⁸ Similarly, Plato contrasts the rational part's concern for the good of the whole soul with the more limited concerns of the non-rational parts (*Republic* 442c5–8); this contrast matches Butler's contrast between the holistic outlook of self-love and the confined outlook of the particular passions.

One might wonder whether Butler's claims about self-love fit the Stoics as well as they fit Plato.¹⁹ Plato, Aristotle, and Butler all think of a virtuous and well-regulated person as having both reasonable self-love and particular passions that potentially conflict with it because they are not inherently rational. The Stoics, however, identify passion with a type of false judgment about good and evil, and so they deny that a virtuous person has any passions. One might conclude that Butler's picture of the well-ordered agent does not fit the Stoic conception of passions.

While it would be reasonable to infer that Butler is not thinking primarily of the Stoic position on the passions, it would be a mistake to infer that his claims about rational self-love and particular passions are irrelevant to a Stoic conception of agency. The Stoics recognize self-love in their doctrine of "conciliation" (*oikeiôsis*) of an animal to itself (for example, Cic. *Fin.* iii 16; Seneca, *Ep.* 121.14–17). At first, conciliation to oneself proceeds without an explicit conception of oneself and one's interest; but the Stoics also recognize the importance in human development of a conception of one's whole life for which one should provide (Cic. *Off.* i 11). The self-love that is guided by this conception of one's whole life may appropriately be called "reasonable self-love," following Butler.

Even when we have formed this conception, it is not the only thing that tends to move us, even if we get rid of passions. For in getting rid of passions, we do not get rid of the appearance that (in most people) precedes a false judgment. The appearance that it would be good to take revenge may incline me to revenge even if I do not judge that it would be good to take revenge; to avoid being influenced by the appearance, I need to evaluate revenge from the standpoint of prudence.²⁰ Though Stoics must reject Butler's description of "particular passions" as genuine passions, they need not reject the division that he marks between particular passions and rational self-love.

9. Self-Love and Happiness

Now that we have considered the ways in which Butler agrees with the ancients in his discussion of self-love and nature, we must also recognize some points of disagreement.

His first deviation is his surprising endorsement of one aspect of hedonism. He believes that his general refutation of psychological hedonism also refutes psychological egoism – the view that all my actions are motivated by self-love. This is because he relies on a narrow conception of self-love. In his view, self-love – my concern for my own interest – aims at my own happiness, understood as my own pleasure. He contrasts a person's "general desire of his own happiness" with his particular affections.

The former proceeds from or is self-love, and seems inseparable from all sensible creatures who can reflect upon themselves and their own interest or happiness, so as to have that interest an object to their minds . . . The object the former pursues is somewhat internal – our own happiness, enjoyment, satisfaction . . . The principle we call "self-love" never seeks anything external for the sake of the thing, but only as a means of happiness or good; particular affections rest in the external things themselves. (xi 5; cf. xi 7, 9) Happiness or satisfaction consists only in the enjoyment of those objects which are by nature suited to our several particular appetites, passions, and affections. (xi 9).

Though the desire for happiness is distinct from the particular passions, it cannot be satisfied unless these passions are satisfied. The idea of someone who is well-off and happy, but has completely failed to achieve any of his particular aims and desires, is self-contradictory. If self-love wholly "engrosses" us, so that we ignore the objects of our particular desires, it defeats its own ends.

But this does not show that self-love aims at my own pleasure, as opposed to external objects.²¹ Self-love values both the achievement of my desires and the pleasure that I take in that achievement. This pleasure depends on my belief that I have achieved something that I value for itself; hence it presupposes that I value the objects of my desire for their own sake (xi 16).²² Butler has no warrant for saying that self-love values pleasure alone; indeed, since (in Butler's view) this pleasure must be belief-dependent, self-love cannot value pleasure alone.

Butler must therefore be wrong to claim that self-love values nothing external for the sake of the thing itself, but values an external thing only as a means of pleasure. If belief-dependent pleasure in (say) having friends assumes that we value having friends for its own sake, self-love should also value the objects for their own sakes.

Butler's conception of a superior principle gives a further reason for rejecting the conception of self-love that appears in his remarks on egoism. If self-love is simply concentrated on pleasure, it looks like one particular

passion among others, and hence does not seem to be a superior principle, since it does not consider the self as a whole, but simply the self as it seeks pleasure. To be superior, it must also consider the proper proportion between the satisfaction of one desire and of another. It cannot do this if it considers only pleasure, for pleasure is not the only thing I have reason to value, if I consider my own interest.

Rejection of Butler's hedonist analysis of self-love also undermines his attempted refutation of psychological egoism. He might be rejecting either or both of two claims: (1) The sole and sufficient motive for all my actions is self-love. (2) Self-love is a necessary motive for all my actions. He does not properly distinguish these two claims, and though he has arguments against them both, he does not seem to see that each claim needs separate discussion.

Only the first egoist thesis is undermined by Butler's point about being "engrossed" by self-love. If we really thought that self-love could replace every other desire, Butler would be right to say that it is self-defeating to be dominated by self-love, so conceived. If we even thought that nothing except the object of self-love is to be valued for its own sake, we would also have a self-defeating policy; for self-love values the achievement of objects that we value for their own sake antecedently to self-love.

The second egoist thesis survives the objection to engrossing self-love. For, according to this thesis, self-love alone need not be the motive of every action. We may value revenge, say, or friendship for its own sake, and our desire for it may be a motive for some of our actions. The egoist simply adds that we would not pursue this object of this desire on this occasion if we did not also believe that it would promote our overall good. Since we regard our good as the right combination of the ends of particular affections, we do not cease to value this object for its own sake simply because we also believe that its pursuit is in our own interest. Against this second egoist thesis, Butler's refutation of hedonism is irrelevant.

This second egoist thesis is the one that we might plausibly ascribe to ancient moralists. Though Butler rejects their position, his reasons for rejecting it are not convincing.

10. Eudaemonism

Butler's next deviation from Stoicism is his rejection of eudaemonism.²³ He recognizes two distinct rational principles – rational self-love and conscience – neither reducible to the other. Both principles are natural (iii 9), but conscience is superior to self-love, and hence is the supreme principle.

The degree of superiority of a principle may be assessed by the extent to which it relies on reasons rather than strength of desires, and by the number of relevant considerations it takes into account. Conscience is the supreme principle because it takes proper account of all the considerations that

matter. It does not simply consider my different passions and their effect on my interest; it also considers my interests and legitimate claims in relation to those of other people like me. Since it takes account of these claims, conscience deserves to be called a "moral faculty."²⁴ The claims that conscience considers consist partly in the demands of rational benevolence, partly in those demands of justice and fairness that are distinct from benevolence.²⁵ Conscience includes our capacity for recognizing these requirements of morality.

So understood, conscience is easily distinguished from self-love, if we accept Butler's narrow conception of self-love. According to this conception, self-love appraises actions from the restricted point of view of my own pleasure. If this is the only question that rational self-love asks, it clearly fails to cover all the questions that are relevant. We would be wrong, then, if we thought that self-love estimated all the relevant considerations at their proper value.

11. The Agreement of Self-Love and Conscience

Though Butler takes conscience to be superior to self-love, he also insists that morality and self-love must agree. In a famous passage about our reflexions in a "cool hour," he seems to suggest that the demand to be shown that following conscience is in our interest is a reasonable demand that deserves an answer.²⁶ Some readers have inferred that Butler endorses eudaemonism, and so takes self-love to be the supreme principle.²⁷ Others have supposed that he treats self-love as at least co-ordinate with conscience.²⁸

An assertion of the supremacy of self-love would have aligned Butler with some influential contemporaries. Their view is illustrated by Daniel Waterland's attack on Butler.²⁹ Waterland urges that there is no moral objection to self-love, which he takes to be loving oneself in everything and loving oneself most. The fault in immorality and selfishness is misguided self-love. Waterland explains his conception of self-love as follows:

Self-love, considered in the general, abstracting from particular circumstances, is neither a vice nor a virtue. It is nothing but the inclination or propension of every man to his own happiness. A passionate desire to be always pleased and well satisfied; neither to feel nor fear any pain or trouble, either of body or mind. It is an instinct of our nature common to all men, and not admitting of any excess or abatement. (37)

Practical reason relies on self-love:

Reason and thought hold out the light, and show us the way to happiness, while the instinct of self-love drives us on in the pursuit of it. The latter without the former would be no better than blind instinct; and the former without the latter would be but useless speculation, and dull lifeless theory. (37)

Waterland thinks it would be neither reasonable nor possible to adhere to virtue and religion if we were going to lose by it on the whole, and he thinks

there could be no obligation to it:

For this would be obliging us to hate ourselves, which is impossible: it would be obliging us to something under pain of being happy upon refusal, and in the hope of being rewarded with misery, which is all over contradictory and absurd; and therefore no obligation. (38)

Waterland does not actually say here that it is impossible to do something disinterested, something that is unconnected to (neither helping nor harming) our interest. But his attack on disinterestedness suggests that he holds this stronger egoist thesis too.³⁰

Waterland's position makes it easier to see the point of Butler's "cool hour" passage. But Butler's position is not Waterland's position. He does not suggest that self-interest is the appropriate motive for virtuous action; on the contrary, virtue consists in "affection to . . . what is right and good, as such." He does not concede that self-love is superior to conscience, or that the authority of conscience must be defended by appeal to self-love. He claims that the proof of the naturalness of conscience is itself sufficient proof that we have reason to follow it (iii 5). The argument for the general – not universal – coincidence of conscience and self-love is simply meant to undermine one objection that people commonly urge against conscience. Even if we concede – falsely, in Butler's view – that self-love is the supreme principle, we have no reason to reject the guidance of conscience.³¹

Still, though the argument begins with a concession to a point of view that Butler rejects, it is not simply a persuasive device directed to those who over-estimate the claims of self-love. Butler also needs the argument if he is to support his claim that virtue is following nature. A successful defense of the harmony of self-love and conscience supports the claim that it is natural to follow conscience. We will be more readily disposed to allow that the attitudes connected with morality are central aspects of our nature, if we are not also disposed to believe that they conflict with self-interest.

We can see this if we recall the connexion between nature, system, harmony, and co-operation. A sharp conflict between self-love and conscience would imply that two superior principles tend to impede, or even to undermine, each other. Human nature might form a system under the guidance of self-love, and a system under the guidance of conscience, but if the two systems tended to clash, we would have reason to doubt whether they constituted a single system. Butler takes our aims, motives, and principles to constitute a system under the principle of "reflexion or conscience"³²; but his case for this claim is weaker if they also constitute a system under reasonable self-love in conflict with conscience. Butler's argument for the harmony of self-love and conscience is relevant and appropriate, without blurring the distinctness of the two principles and without compromising the supremacy of conscience.

Butler, however, makes it difficult to argue for harmony, because of his hedonist conception of self-love. He assumes that when self-love sets out to

consider the pros and cons of acting on conscience, it simply considers the possible yield of pleasure, contentment, and so on. This is why he thinks that someone who adopts morally virtuous action for self-interested reasons is following the Epicurean policy, and does not take the “religious or even moral institution of life” (P 41), because such a person does not act from the virtuous motive.

This claim about the outlook of self-love rests on the assumption that self-love does not care about actions for their own sake, but only for their causal consequences, insofar as they result in pain or pleasure. But if we accept this view of self-love, it is difficult to agree with Butler’s claim about the harmony of self-love and conscience. Different people find different things pleasant and painful; why should following conscience be expected to maximize each person’s pleasure? Butler’s departures from traditional naturalism do not leave him with a completely defensible position.

12. Expanded Self-Love

How, then, ought we to modify Butler’s position? Most of his successors have agreed with his deviations from Stoic naturalism, and have inferred that he ought not to have retained the harmony of self-love and conscience.³³ According to this view, the claims about harmony are a survival from a traditional position that Butler ought to have dropped together with the other aspects of Stoic naturalism that he rejects.

This revision of Butler is open to objection. I have suggested that the doctrine of harmony is not an optional extra in Butler’s position, and is not a mere persuasive device for commending morality to those who do not accept it for better reasons; it is also part of Butler’s defense of the natural character of conscience. If two superior principles – self-love and conscience – were basically antagonistic, it would be difficult to show that either of them fulfills the requirements of the system as a whole. If Butler has to abandon the doctrine of harmony, he seriously weakens his naturalism as well.

We ought therefore to consider, on Butler’s behalf, a different revision of his position. We have seen good reasons for rejecting Butler’s first deviation from traditional naturalism, his hedonist conception of self-love. That conception is not only implausible in itself, but also inconsistent with Butler’s own reasons for claiming that it is natural to follow rational self-love. Self-love can claim to take the point of view of myself as a whole only if its aims include whatever is worth pursuing for its own sake. A holist conception of nature requires a holist conception of self-love. This conception of self-love underlies Stoic views about happiness. Butler’s naturalism about self-love, therefore, seems to require Stoic eudaemonism rather than his own conception of self-love.

If, then, the hedonist conception of self-love is mistaken, and a holist conception is preferable, self-love cannot be confined to a desire for my

own pleasure. It must consider my attachment to the good of others, and to the moral virtues, and must count the achievement of these desires as part of my own interest. If it is part of our nature, and hence essential to us as whole selves, to care about moral principles, self-love must take account of our concern with moral principles. If they were not prominent in our conception of the self, self-love would be misinformed.

This holist conception of self-love makes it more reasonable for Butler to maintain the harmony of self-love and conscience. If he had stuck to traditional eudaemonism on this point, he could have defended the rest of his naturalist position more convincingly.

13. The Superiority of Conscience

If, however, we restore this element of traditional eudaemonism to Butler, it seems more difficult for him to maintain that conscience is superior to rational self-love. For a holist conception of self-love seems to absorb the demands of morality without recognizing conscience as supreme. The Stoics insist that we misunderstand the proper place of morality in our lives unless we treat the morally right (*honestum*) as part of, and not merely instrumental to, the good.

The significance of this issue will become clearer if we compare Butler's attitude with the Stoic attitude to the choice of virtue for its own sake. Butler agrees with Cicero in contrasting the Epicurean attitude with the attitudes of other ancient moralists. He takes the Epicurean attitude to be the one that is dominated by self-love:

[I]f self-love were so strong and prevalent, as that they would uniformly pursue this their supposed chief temporal good, without being diverted from it by any particular passion; it would manifestly prevent numberless follies and vices. This was in a great measure the Epicurean system of philosophy. It is indeed by no means the religious or even moral institution of life. (P 41)

Butler believes he has given reasons for rejecting the Epicurean position.

From the distinction above made between self-love, and the several particular principles or affections in our nature, we may see how good ground there was for that assertion, maintained by the several ancient schools of philosophy against the Epicurean, namely, that virtue is to be pursued as an end, eligible in and for itself. . . . They indeed asserted much higher things of virtue, and with very good reason; but to say thus much of it, that it is to be pursued for itself, is to say no more of it, than may be truly said of the object of every natural affection whatever. (P 42)

If Butler is right in his defense of the Stoics (and others) against the Epicureans, it is difficult to see why he does not also agree with Cicero's way of exposing the Epicurean error. According to Cicero, the error consists in failing to include virtue in happiness. Butler, however, does not describe

the error in this way. If he agreed with Cicero, he would take reasonable self-love to include virtue as one of its objects, instead of treating the object of self-love as pleasure to which the achievement of other aims is simply a means.

If we replace Butler's conception of happiness and self-love with the Stoic conception, it is more difficult to see why self-love should not be the supreme principle. Its supremacy does not seem to undermine conscience, for it distinguishes the requirements of morality from those requirements of prudence that do not involve concern for other people. The requirements of conscience embody the morally right rather than narrow advantage; but they do not lie outside self-love and happiness, as the Stoics understand them. Butler, therefore, seems to have no reason to insist on the separation of conscience from self-love. The traditional naturalist position seems to be both more coherent and more plausible than the one that Butler substitutes for it; indeed, it seems to provide a more plausible defense than Butler himself provides for the natural character of self-love and conscience, and for the harmony of the two principles.

14. Conscience and Rational Nature

This defense of traditional naturalism against Butler's claims about self-love and conscience does not do justice to Butler's position as a whole. In particular, we have not attended to his claims about the character of conscience. To show that following conscience is natural, we must also show that in following it, we are guided by reasons that apply to a human being as a whole system, not merely as a collection of passions and desires.³⁴ How does conscience fit into this holistic conception of nature?

Some aspects of conscience are best understood as extensions of self-love. Self-love is essentially fair between the different passions and interests that it has to consider. Extending Butler's political comparison, we might say that the legitimate government of self-love is concerned to give the fair and appropriate place to each special interest going with each particular passion, without allowing itself to be dominated by whichever passion can shout most loudly in support of its demands. If one passion is restrained, the restraint is justified by the legitimate interests of the other passions. Rational self-love is impartial between them; it is not biased by the strength of one particular passion.

Similarly, Butler might claim, conscience deals fairly with the different claims of the different individuals whose interests are involved in a situation that concerns it. It is not biased by partiality to oneself, or by a self-sacrificing attitude that considers only the desires of other people. Conscience takes an impartial view of all the people whose interests are involved. To ignore the point of view of conscience would be parallel to ignoring some of our particular passions and interests simply because others are stronger. Just as

all the interests relevant to the decision made by self-love are real interests of the self, so all the people relevant to the decisions made by conscience are real persons with claims equal to my own. Hence, Butler might argue, if we acknowledge the reality of other people, the only appropriate point of view to take towards them is the point of view of conscience.

The fact that conscience acknowledges the reality of other people and prescribes fair treatment of each person helps to show why it is supreme. It incorporates some of the demands of self-love, insofar as it prescribes proper concern for one's own interest as a moral duty (D 6). It also recognizes other people as having claims that are equal to my own.

Why should we take this point of view? Why should we not simply regard other people as competitors for scarce resources, with each of us trying to promote his own interest irrespective of the interests of the others? We can understand Butler's answer if we consider the reasons for taking the point of view of self-love. He argues that unless we accept its point of view, we abandon the distinction between authority and strength; we abandon any view of ourselves as rational, temporally extended, agents. The result of abandoning conscience would be analogous: we would cease to treat other people as people who deserve things, and we would also have to abandon the claim that we deserve anything from them.

Butler needs to show, then, that we essentially regard ourselves in certain ways that (once we think about it) turn out to involve recognizably moral relations to others. If, for instance, we essentially regard ourselves as deserving certain kinds of treatment, and not simply as wanting it from the point of view of our own interest, then we essentially include more than we can recognize simply from the point of view of self-interest. Butler insists that the recognition of character and responsibility, and the correlative recognition of desert are essential elements of the moral point of view (D 2–3). He equally insists that they are essential elements of human nature; if we did not evaluate ourselves and other people from any point of view other than that of self-love, we would be failing to consider an essential feature of ourselves. The failure would be no less grave than the failure to think of ourselves as temporally extended and as more than a mere collection of passions.

An extension of this line of thought might support Butler. To forgo evaluation by any principles applying to ourselves and others, and to forgo beliefs and sentiments connected with resentment, gratitude, praise, blame, desert, and so on, would be to curtail radically the normal expressions of our nature. To consider myself as a whole, as a system constituted by the relation of my desires to superior principles, I must consider myself as taking these attitudes to myself in relation to others. This is why I act in accordance with my nature in taking the principle embodying these attitudes as the supreme principle; that principle is conscience.

The character of Butler's argument is still easier to grasp if we see the connexion between his account of superior principles and Plato's account

of justice in the soul. Butler's use of the political notions of authority and power expresses his acceptance of one part of Plato's political analogy. Butler applies the analogy to self-love, arguing that it reaches a fair arrangement of the various particular passions because it is guided by rational evaluation that attaches the appropriate value to each of them. To accept the guidance of self-love and reject the guidance of conscience would be to allow superior principles only a partial influence over us, and so would be to express our nature as rational agents only in one aspect of our lives.

Despite Butler's brevity and obscurity, his exploration of the connexions between conscience and rational nature is fuller and more plausible than anything we can find in the ancient moralists. Butler takes an important step beyond those predecessors who defend the claim that virtue consists in following nature, for he suggests why the point of view of conscience fulfills human nature by its impartiality. In his view, it is essential to free and rational human agency that we take ourselves to be entitled to treatment as responsible agents. Once we introduce this element of entitlement, we introduce an impartial point of view that commits us to recognizing the same entitlements in others, and hence, in Butler's view, introduces non-utilitarian principles of morality. His account of the hierarchy of superior principles that belong to rational nature presents the character of these principles more clearly than we can find them presented in any predecessor. On this point, he develops a central element in the Stoic position, but develops it beyond the ways in which the Stoics themselves develop it.

He departs from the Stoics, however, more than he needs to, or ought to, in order to make room for his distinctive claims about the connexion between morality and nature. His hedonist conception of self-love supports his separation of conscience from self-love, but it raises difficulties for the harmony of self-love and conscience. The Stoic and Aristotelian conception of happiness as ultimate good supports Butler's holist conception of rational self-love. It does not require the absorption of conscience into self-love. Butler's defense of the natural character of conscience would be strengthened, not weakened, by closer adherence to Stoic naturalism.

Notes

1. The *Sermons* were first published in 1726. A revised version appeared in 1729. The "Dissertation on Virtue" (appended to *The Analogy of Religion*, published in 1736) is an important supplement to the *Sermons*. I cite Butler by sermon and paragraph number, from Bernard (1900). "P" refers to the Preface, and "D" to the "Dissertation on Virtue."
2. Ross (1939), 77f.
3. This chapter overlaps in places with my chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* [Inwood (forthcoming)]. The latter chapter covers more ground, and provides some context for the more detailed discussion of Butler in this chapter.

4. In his note on P 13, Bernard cites D.L. vii 87 and Cic. *Off* iii 21, and adds: "Yet it must be observed that by the precept 'Follow nature' Butler meant something widely different from the Stoic interpretation of that precept. The Stoics meant by it a wise obedience to the laws of the universe; Butler means obedience to the system of *human* nature, which amounts, in practice, to a following of conscience as its most important and distinctive constituent. The *formula Stoicorum*, in its original import, was far more nearly akin to the ethical principles of Clarke and the rational school of moralists than to those of Butler." (Bernard's phrase "formula Stoicorum" is misleading about the syntax of *Off* iii 20, where "Stoicorum" depends on "rationi disciplinaeque" rather than on "formula.")
5. *Romans* 2:14.
6. "Now a person who found no mystery in this way of speaking of the ancients; who, without being very explicit with himself, kept to his natural feeling, went along with them, and found within himself a full conviction, that what they laid down was just and true; such an one would probably wonder to see a point, in which he never perceived any difficulty, so laboured as this is, in the second and third Sermons . . . But it need not be thought strange, that this manner of expression, though familiar with them, and, if not usually carried so far, yet not uncommon amongst ourselves, should want explaining; since there are several perceptions daily felt and spoken of, which yet it may not be very easy at first view to explicate, to distinguish from all others, and ascertain exactly what the idea or perception is. . . . Thus, though there seems no ground to doubt, but that the generality of mankind have the inward perception expressed so commonly in that manner by the ancient moralists . . . yet it appeared of use to unfold that inward conviction, and lay it open in a more explicit manner than I had seen done." (P 13)
7. ". . . there were not wanting persons, who manifestly mistook the whole thing, and so had great reason to express themselves dissatisfied with it. A late author of great and deserved reputation says, that to place virtue in following nature, is at best a loose way of talk. And he has reason to say this, if what I think he intends to express, though with great decency, be true, that scarce any other sense can be put upon these words, but acting as any of the several parts, without distinction, of a man's nature happened most to incline him." (P 13). Butler refers to Wollaston; see Raphael (1969), 291.
8. Cf. Stobaeus, *Eclogae*, ii 76.16–23; 77.16–19.
9. D.L. here attributes to Chrysippus the view that the nature one ought to follow is "the common nature and distinctively (*idiôs*) human nature." The reference to "common nature" introduces an element of the Stoic position that I will not discuss here. Cf. Bernard's comment quoted in n.4, and n.12 on Butler's teleology.
10. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, xii 5.7; Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 76.9.
11. "Thus nothing can possibly be more contrary to nature than vice, meaning by 'nature' not only the several parts of our inward frame, but also the constitution of it." (P 15) "Man may act according to that principle or inclination which for the present happens to be strongest, and yet act in a way disproportionate to, and violate, his real proper nature." (ii 10) "It is from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and, above all, the supremacy of reflexion or conscience, that we get the idea

of the system or constitution of human nature. And from the idea itself it will as fully appear that this our nature, that is, constitution, is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears that its nature, that is, constitution or system, is adapted to measure time." (P 14)

12. Butler's teleology is discussed by Millar (1988) and (1992). Millar relies on claims about the causal origin of the different traits that Butler calls natural. His discussion shows how such claims may lead Butler into difficulties.
13. Butler's distinction is over-simplified. Even if we appear to decide simply by consulting our stronger inclination, we may still consider the merits of the different course of action. Often we decide that both are acceptable, so that it is all right to go by our stronger inclination.
14. Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem* 1122a-f.
15. Does Butler also recognize benevolence as a superior principle? For discussion and references see Penelhum (1985), 31–5; Frey (1992); McNaughton (1992).
16. In attributing superiority to self-love without reference to conscience, I am disagreeing with Darwall (1995), 255ff. If Darwall is right (so that the superiority of self-love depends on its endorsement by conscience), Butler's position is in one respect more different from the Stoic position than I take it to be (since he does not take self-love to be a superior principle in its own right), but in another respect more similar to the Stoic position than I take it to be (since he recognizes only one principle that is superior in its own right).
17. This immediately follows the passage quoted in n.32.
18. The parallel with Plato on the soul is mentioned by Bernard on iii 2, who refers to Whewell (1848).
19. Here I am responding to some questions raised by Jerome Schneewind.
20. I have briefly discussed these issues about the Stoics in Irwin (1998), 193–8. They are discussed at greater length by Sorabji (2000), esp. in Ch. 24 (with whom I do not completely agree).
21. In speaking of the "enjoyment of those objects . . .", Butler might simply be using "enjoyment" in the sense of "achieving or satisfying a desire." But even if he means it more specifically to imply pleasure, the fact that enjoyment of achieving my goal is part of my ultimate end by no means shows that it is the whole of it.
22. We might reject Butler's assumption that all pleasure rests on this belief about the value of the object of desire. But if some pleasure rests on it, the point about self-love still stands.
23. Cf. Sidgwick (1892), 197f.
24. "It is manifest great part of common language, and of common behaviour over the world, is formed upon supposition of such a moral faculty, whether called conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason; whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding or as a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both." (D 1)
25. In D 8, Butler argues that morality includes more than benevolence.
26. "... there can no access be had to the understanding but by convincing men that the course of life we would persuade them to is not contrary to their interest. It may be allowed, without any prejudice to the cause of virtue and religion, that our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us; that they will, nay, if you please, that they ought to prevail over

those of order, and beauty, and harmony, proportion, if there ever should be, as it is impossible there ever should be, any inconsistency between them: though these last too, as expressing the fitness of actions, are as real as truth itself. Let it be allowed, though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and good, as such; yet, that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it." (xi 20)

27. The supremacy of self-love in the *Sermons* (in contrast to the *Analogy*) is maintained by McPherson (1948), who argues that Butler takes self-love and conscience to be identical, and maintains that "‘productive of happiness’ may be regarded as the *ground* of rightness" (327). He thus concludes that Butler is an "egoistic eudaemonist" (330). This view would bring his position somewhat closer to that of the Greek moralists. McPherson's attribution of eudaemonism to Butler is rejected by Raphael (1949), 236; Grave (1952), 83f.
28. Sidgwick (1892), 196, takes this passage to affirm that self-love is a rational principle not subordinate to conscience. This, in his view, is why Butler believes that a course of action approved by conscience must still be examined from a distinctly rational point of view, to see whether it meets all the relevant standards of rationality. After quoting the "cool hour" passage Sidgwick continues: "That the ultimate appeal must be to the individual's interest was similarly assumed in Shaftesbury's argument . . ."
29. *Waterland* (1823), vol. ix (*Sermons*, collected 1741–2, not further dated), Sermon 3 on Self-Love, pp. 35–55. See Whewell (1852), 129.
30. "But the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God is highly conspicuous in this affair; that whereas the general happiness of the whole rational or intellectual system is what himself proposes as the noblest end, and holds forth to all his creatures; yet since no one can pursue any good but with reference to himself, and as his own particular good, God has been pleased to connect and interweave these two, one with the other, that a man cannot really pursue his own particular welfare without consulting the welfare of the whole. His own private happiness is included in that of the public: and there is, in reality, no such thing as any separate advantage or felicity, opposite to the felicity of the whole, or independent of it." (39)
31. The concessive reading is supported by the long sentence "It may be allowed . . .", where Butler makes it clear that he is "allowing" several things. See Sturgeon (1976), 338, Broad (1930), 80.
32. "[Nature] . . . is the inward frame of man considered as a system or constitution; whose several parts are united, not by a physical principle of individuation, but by the respects they have to each other; the chief of which is the subjection which the appetites, passions, and particular affections have to the one supreme principle of reflexion or conscience. The system or constitution is formed by and consists in these respects and this subjection". (iii 2n, continued in the passage quoted in n.17).
33. See Price (1787), 256–9; Sidgwick (1907), 501f.
34. See iii 2n, quoted in notes 17 and 32.

Bibliography of Primary Sources

This bibliography is unusual in the range of material covered, including works from many of the main figures in the two periods being studied. To simplify its use, material has been grouped either by philosopher or (where multiple philosophers are included in one book) as a collection. Also, this bibliography is not comprehensive; roughly speaking, works that are *used* are included, but those that are only *mentioned* are not. Finally, in cases where it wasn't clear whether an item was a secondary or primary source, it is listed in the bibliography of secondary sources.

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